

1920



## JANUARY

### **"Military Intelligence Department Undercover Surveillance Report of the Communist Labor Party."**

[events of Dec. 30, 1919 to Jan. 3, 1920] Jacob Spolansky's Sept. 2, 1919 report indicated that the US Military Intelligence Department had a mole (employee or informer not specified) on the floor as a delegate to the founding convention of the Communist Labor Party. This report, written by an MID operative and accompanied by a Jan. 12, 1920 cover letter from Gen. M. Churchill, head of Military Intelligence, makes this fact

even more interesting—rather than an obscure figure from the hinterlands, it is clear that MID had its representative in the very highest councils of the CLP. The MID agent arrived in New York City on Dec. 30, 1919 (implying that he was not a New Yorker). He "immediately visited the Communist Labor Party headquarters at 208 E 12th St., top floor," clearly indicating that he was of sufficient stature within the CLP organization to know such things. He notes that Ruthenberg and Ferguson (of the CPA) were present in at a meeting there, along with Ludwig Katterfeld (#2 man in the CLP), Big Jim Larkin, Ben Gitlow, and others. Wagenknecht was expected in New York, but remained in Cleveland, the former headquarters of the CLP organization. "At the request of those present Katterfeld wired Wagenknecht to the Cleveland headquarters that I was in New York and for him to return at once," the report notes—again clearly implying the non-New York origins and high status of the cloaked MID agent. "I took most of the leaders to lunch and learned from Ruthenberg that a tip had been sent out by Ludwig Martens from Washington, DC, that raids on radical organizations will be made between Jan. 5th and Jan. 10, 1920, and that no meetings should be held during that time"—indicating that news of J. Edgar Hoover's forthcoming mass raids against non-citizen members of the CPA and CLP was leaking to the targeted organizations. Wagenknecht wired back that he would be in New York on Jan. 1 and that he had to meet a bill of \$250 for a printing press. The MID agent was approached for money (indicating an ongoing financial role with the CLP) and when he declined to "come across with any money" was consequently "treated fairly cool all morning." Only by kicking in \$75 for the CLP and Gitlow-Larkin Defense Fund (a substantial sum) was the MID operative able to succeed in "buying" the confidence of Katterfeld. A meeting of the "Provisional Executive Board" (?) was called for Jan. 1 to discuss the situation; a message was received indicating that a raid was imminent and Katterfeld "secured a suitcase and filled it with mailing and membership lists," packing the sensitive material to his home, an undisclosed location. At the meeting of the "Provisional Executive Board," Gitlow asked "why Martens had not sent the usual remittance" (indicating an ongoing financial relationship between the Russian Soviet Government Bureau and the CLP). An order was issued to terminate all party meetings until Jan. 11, 1920—that is, after the anticipated window for the Hoover Raids. On Jan. 3 (the day after the mass raids), the MID operative arrived in Chicago, where he was promptly arrested not once but twice visiting radical bookstores—lying about his identity and preserving his cover.

**“First Telegram to Agents in Charge of Offices of the Bureau of Investigation, from J. Edgar Hoover in the name of Frank Burke, Assistant Director and Chief.”** [Jan. 2, 1920]

First set of final instructions to Special Agents in charge of the 33 offices of the Bureau of Investigation wired by the chief planner of the operation, J. Edgar Hoover. Since Hoover was technically a “special assistant” to Attorney General Mitchell Palmer, all of his key communications to Special Agents in the field appear over the signature of the agents’ superior, Chief of the Bureau of Investigation Frank Burke. Hoover wires: “All instructions previously issued to you for carrying out arrests of Communists should be executed in detail. Several requests have been made for change of date but no change or delay under any condition will be granted. As previously stated the arrests are to take place Friday January 2nd commencing 9 p.m. eastern time.” Hoover reminds the agents that “particular attention is again called to the securing of evidence sufficient to hold subject for deportation.”

**“Second Telegram to Agents in Charge of Offices of the Bureau of Investigation, from J. Edgar Hoover in the name of Frank Burke, Assistant Director and Chief.”** [Jan. 2, 1920]

This cable is apparently the last communication sent by J. Edgar Hoover to the Agents in Charge of offices of the Bureau of Investigation—instructions to the agents on issuing statements to the press. Instead of maintaining silence until the morning after the big operation, now the agents are freed to make statements immediately after arrests were completed on the night of Jan. 2nd—enabling the story to make a splash in the morning editions on Jan. 3rd. “Your statement should cover only local situation and may contain fact that arrests are nationwide in scope and being directed by Attorney General,” Hoover indicates.

**“The Red Raids.”** [leaflet of the Communist Labor Party, January 1920] This leaflet was produced in the immediate aftermath of the Jan. 2, 1920 mass raids conducted under the direction of Attorney General Mitchell Palmer and serves as an answer to that coordinated assault on the organization’s existence. “The Capitalist Government of the United States in a mad hysterical rage is trying to stave off the inevitable collapse of Capitalism,” the manifesto contends, stating that “ignorant, vicious, and corrupt officials are persecuting thousands of men and women who have declared their allegiance to the revolutionary working class movement.” The foreign-born workers at the focus of this assault are the very same whose “sweat and blood” has built the billions of dollars in wealth which enabled the capitalist class to live in luxury. “Most of the workers now held for deportation will be more than pleased to be shipped out of the country where there is no semblance even of Capitalist law, where governmental anarchy reigns supreme, and where it is dangerous for one even to think,” the leaflet raged. The examples of the treatment administered to the steelworkers and mine workers in their respective strikes, and the refusal to seat democratically-elected Socialist representatives served to illustrate the fundamental rottenness of American capitalism and its governmental appendage. “The Communist Labor Party realizes that the only way out of the Capitalist Anarchy now reigning supreme is through the overthrow of Capitalism and the establishment of the rule of the working class. Capitalism in Europe is fast crumbling to pieces, and American Capitalism, dependent upon Europe, will meet the same fate,” the leaflet warns.

**“Agreement for the Unification of the American Communist Party and the American Communist Labor Party.”** [signed Jan. 12, 1920] Anxious to end the division of the American communist movement into two hostile organizations, a deal was brokered in Moscow by the Comintern between John Reed, international delegate of the Communist Labor Party, and John Anderson [née Kristap Beika], who had been sent to Soviet Russia on behalf of 5 of the main Language Federations which were to emerge in September 1919 as the Communist Party of America. This deal called for a 6 member Bureau of Unity, to which each party would contribute 3 members, which would temporarily handle joint publishing and organizational work and would convene a unity convention to establish the “United Communist Party of America.” Delegates to the convention were to be assigned proportionate to the actually paid memberships of the two organizations as of Jan. 1, 1920. The role of federations in the new organization was explicitly defined, to conduct propaganda in their own language and to have freedom to use whatever special funds they could generate from among their members, but not to collect and remit party dues or to have the right of admission or expulsion of members and branches. The language press was to be subjugated to control of the center. This agreement was dispatched to America with Reed and Anderson, together with approximately \$50,000 in Comintern funds, primarily in the form of gemstones—none of which reached its destination. After leaving, Anderson abandoned any attempt at implementing the terms of the unity agreement that he signed, and his lack of a mandate from the CPA led that organization to completely repudiate the terms of the deal.

**“Letter from Grigori Zinoviev on behalf of the ECCI to the Central Executive Committee of the CPA and National Executive Committee of the CLPA, January 12, 1920.”** A seminal document in the history of the American Communist movement, the first official statement of the position of the Communist International on the division of the American Communist movement into two competing organizations. Zinoviev represented the split a “heavy blow to the communist movement in America” which was in the final analysis based upon “certain disagreements on the question of tactics, principally questions of organization” rather than differences of program. Zinoviev stated that the foreign language based and theoretically more advanced Communist Party and anglophonic Communist Labor Party were supplemental to one another and noted that the ECCI “categorically insists” on the immediate unification of the two organizations. A joint unity conference based upon equal representation of the two groups was proposed. Zinoviev brought 9 points to the attention of the American parties: (1) The need for a broad-based party; (2) While a complete break with the old socialist parties was necessary, individual members and groups from those organizations were suitable for communist membership; (3) “It is particularly necessary to remember that the stage of verbal propaganda and agitation has been left behind, the time for decisive battles has arrived” and the broad proletarian masses thus must be attracted to the communist party; (4) The Communists should work to hasten the demise of the AF of L by supporting the revolutionary industrial unions of the IWW, OBU, and WIIU; (5) The party must build workers’ committees in the shops in parallel to the party organizations therein; (6) While the language federations had played and would continue to play an important role in America integrating workers into the English-speaking movement, “the party must not represent a conglomeration of independent or semi-autonomous ‘national federations;’” (7) The use of referendums should be reduced to a minimum with the Central Committee vested with “complete authority” between party conclaves; (8) The establishment of a daily newspaper was one of the most important immediate practical tasks of the American party; and (9) An underground party organization comprised of trusted comrades was immediately necessary, to conduct revolutionary

propaganda and to carry on the party's work in the event of violent suppression of the party apparatus.

**"Government Spies Wrote Planks in Communist Platform, also Laid Bombs, is Charge: Washington Stirred to Depths by Sensational Accusations Against Government Spies—Russian Republic Representative Demands Full Hearing Before Senate."** [Jan. 14, 1920] Article from the pages of the CLP's legal organ, The Toiler, detailing the charges made by Santeri Nuorteva of the Russian Soviet Government Bureau that "We have conclusive evidence that agents of the Department of Justice have actively participated in the organization of the Communist Party of America, and that those very planks in the program of the party which now form the basis of the persecution of thousands of people have been drafted and inserted into that platform by such government agents." No commentary on this matter is offered from a Communist Labor Party perspective; instead, an unnamed US Senator is quoted as saying, "If America has emerged from the world war a nest of spies and official plotters against exploited classes at home and against new experiments in government abroad, the American people ought to be informed of it immediately." Nuorteva's full statement to the press of Jan. 6, 1920, is appended to the news article.

**"Who is the Destroyer of Liberty?"** by Elmer T. Allison [Jan. 14, 1920] \*\*\*REVISED EDITION\*\*\* Corrects error in the biographical footnote. This front page statement by Elmer T. Allison, editor of The Toiler, proclaims the death of "Liberty" and "Freedom" in the United States. Allison cites political raids and arrests which rendered the constitutional right of assembly a hollow mockery, the crushing of the steel strike by the organized forces of capital which belied any supposed right to organization of labor, and the denial of Victor Berger his Congressional seat and 5 New York Socialists their Assembly seats which abrogated the right of voters to elect representatives of their choice. Allison declares: "Capitalism knows no law but the law of its own will. It will without a quiver wreck its own laws when they stand in its way. It acknowledges but one law - the law of force. The workers must forge new weapons if they would win against entrenched and powerful capital. We know now that we can never win by merely 'gaining 51% of the ballots.' We know that capitalism has no more respect for majorities than it has for minorities.... To live, Labor must rule. And to rule, it must cease depending upon the 'rights' given by dead constitutions. It must by force of its invincible numbers write a Constitution in which only they who labor shall share."

**"Letter to Alfred Wagenknecht in Brooklyn from Max Bedacht in San Francisco, Jan. 21, 1920."** The Palmer Raids of Jan. 1920 cut the organizational centers of the Communist and other radical organizations off from their affiliates in the field. This letter from member of the Communist Labor Party's NEC Max Bedacht to CLP Executive Secretary notes the recent receipt of a letter which broke a silence of "some weeks." Bedacht relates the story of the Wilson regime's repression in California. While himself under Grand Jury indictment and out on bail, Bedacht calls San Francisco "an oasis in the desert of the United States," noting only one arrest. Across the bay in Oakland, on the other hand, state political thuggery was in full swing: "There were wholesale arrests there. Local 'authorities' there are completely under the control of the Chamber of Commerce, which in turn rules through the American Legion. We have all

hands full here to help comrades from jail." Bedacht notes that hosts of foreign-speaking members of the Socialist Party had been swept up in Palmer's net and held for deportation on the basis of their names appearing on the books of the CLP—due to the fact that CLP organizers brought with them the old books of the Socialist Party! "The SP is doing absolutely nothing for them, so we will have to look out for them also," Bedacht notes, adding that \$90,000 in property is already tied up for bail in the case in which he was himself embroiled alone. Bedacht asks for a report from Wagenknecht on the situation in New York and elsewhere.

**"Socialist Party Going Strong!"** by Jack Carney [Jan. 23, 1920] Sarcastically titled commentary on the state of the rival Socialist Party of America from Communist Labor Party NEC member and newspaper editor Jack Carney of Duluth, Minnesota. Carney argues that the SPA's actions in the matter of the 5 expelled New York Socialist assemblymen validates the Communist analysis of the SPA. The expulsion "was a deathblow to the Socialist Party until—prominent capitalist politicians, lawyers, and masters of industry sensed that this action on the part of the New York Assembly proved the contention of the communists that simple political action would never emancipate the working class and that the capitalist class dictatorship would never permit a working class majority in any legislative assembly to function, even in a pseudo-revolutionary manner." The bourgeoisie thus came to the aid of the Socialist Party in its own class defense with legal defense fundraising and contributions of personal service, Carney indicates.

**85 Heads of Communists Are Indicted by US Jury: Charge is 'Conspiracy to Cause Armed Revolution': Bonds Put at \$5,000."** (*Milwaukee Leader*)[events of Jan. 23-24, 1920] Coming on the heels of a mass arrest of members of the Communist Labor Party on conspiracy charges for having held their founding convention in Chicago came the Jan. 23, 1920 indictment of 85 key figures of the Communist Party of America. This article from the Milwaukee Leader is useful for its extensive listing of those embroiled in the case. Those arrested included CPA CEC Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg, as well as CEC members and top cadres Rose Pastor Stokes, Nick Hourwich, Louis Fraina, Isaac Ferguson, Oscar Tyverovsky, John J. Ballam, Alexander Bittelman, Daniel Elbaum, K.B. Karosses, Paul Petras, John Schwartz, Joseph Kowalski. Also included were heads of the various foreign language federations associated with the CPA as well as a list of "ordinary" delegates to the CPA founding convention.

**"Report on Unity Conferences, January 28, 1920,"** by Alfred Wagenknecht A succinct but detailed chronicle of the early unity discussions between the unity committees of Communist Labor Party and Communist Party of America. Wagenknecht states that the first contact took the form of a letter from CPA German Federation Translator-Secretary Fritz Friedman, who wrote to Wagenknecht attempting to set up informal talks. This was followed by the CLP's NEC electing a committee of 2, Ed Lindgren and Alfred Wagenknecht, who met directly with I.E. Ferguson and set up a meeting with the CLP committee and CPA Executive Secretary Ruthenberg. On Jan. 17, 1920, the CLP committee, now including L.E. Katterfeld, met informally with Ruthenberg and another member of the CPA. The CPA then named its own formal unity committee of 3, consisting of Alex Bittelman, Max Cohen, and Charles Dirba; this

group met formally with Alexander Bilan, Katterfeld, and Lindgren of the CLP on Jan. 24, 1920, with Ruthenberg, Ferguson, and Wagenknecht also present in an informal capacity. The CPA issued a proposal that a joint call for a unity convention take place on the basis of the CPA program and constitution (i.e. semi-autonomous federations) with merged Executive Committees (the CPA's CEC had 15 members, the CLP's NEC just 5). The CLP countered asking for a joint declaration that there were no fundamental differences of principle between the two organizations, issuing a joint call based on the manifesto and program of the CPA, and recognizing that the new underground principles had rendered the constitutions of both organizations inoperable, and offering to merge executive committees in the interim, leaving the federation structure of both organizations untouched. The CPA was to consider the counterproposal and report back, Wagenknecht states.

**["Letter to Max Bedacht in San Francisco from Alfred Wagenknecht in Brooklyn, Jan. 30, 1920."](#)**

Reply of National Executive Secretary Wagenknecht to the Jan. 21, 1920 request of NEC member Max Bedacht for a status report of the Communist Labor Party in the wake of the Palmer raids. Repression was especially severe in the Northeast, with New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts especially hard hit, Wagenknecht notes. In Illinois the entire local, state, and national CLP apparatus had been arrested and the headquarters of the Communist Party of America was shut down under continuing police occupation. Wagenknecht relates a report he had heard that the CPA would reestablish headquarters shortly in New York City. The CLP had 8 members remaining in custody at Ellis Island, 2 awaiting bail in Illinois, and others held at Deer Island, near Boston. The situation for the CPA and the Union of Russian Workers was more difficult, with a number of their members held at Ellis Island and elsewhere.

**["Report of the Executive Secretary to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America, Jan. 18, 1920,"](#)**

by C.E. Ruthenberg. This document, a handwritten report by C.E. Ruthenberg in the Comintern Archive, indicates for the first time that the underground structure of the old Communist Party of America based around industrial urban centers was not a matter of external direction or unhinged revolutionary ardor, but was rather a direct result of the January 2, 1920, coordinated raids against the radical movement conducted by the Justice Department and its state and local associates in law enforcement. Ruthenberg here unveils his concept of "Organization Centers," each headed by a paid secretary under the discipline and instruction of the Central Executive Committee of the party and working with party units within the proximity of that center without regard to state geographic boundaries. Such a structure marked a major departure from the previous structure of "state parties" that had been used by both the CPA and the CLP prior to that date. Ruthenberg also comments on the question of unity with the CLP, the party press, and other organizational matters at this first meeting of the CPA's CEC held after the Palmer Raids.

**["Special Report on Radical Activities in the San Francisco District,"](#)**

by F.W. Kelly [Week Ending Jan. 10, 1920] Weekly Department of Justice intelligence report for the San Francisco district by Bureau of Investigation agent F.W. Kelly. Kelly details the local results of the coordinated nationwide "Palmer Raid" of January 2-3, 1920 to his supervisors. "Of the 28

warrants received by the Immigration authorities for the apprehension of alien members of the COMMUNIST LABOR PARTY, 21 of the persons so covered were arrested and interviewed by this department on the night and morning of January 2nd and 3rd," he notes. No American citizens were arrested in the operation, Kelly adds, clearly indicating that a targeting of deportable aliens was central to the operation's strategic plan. Difficulty was being had proving the party membership those arrested, however, as "all records of the COMMUNIST LABOR PARTY relating to membership were either destroyed by members of the American Legion, who raided the State Headquarters at Oakland early in November, or have been kept under cover by the officials of the organization," Kelly notes. As a result "this department is now conducting an investigation at the places where those aliens denying membership have been employed, and will follow with an investigation in the neighborhood in which they reside, for the purpose of securing evidence of expression of radical convictions or acknowledgment of affiliation with this party." Agent Kelly additionally notes having paid attention to the issue of dependent families of those arrested, making arrangements with Cooperative Charities of Oakland "for the care of the single family requiring this attention."

**"CLP National Executive Committee Minutes: Jan. 3 to 23, 1920."** While this esoteric document regrettably picks up immediately after the Jan. 2 session attended by an undercover informer of the Military Intelligence Division, it does fill in detail about the Communist Labor Party's unity negotiations with the rival Communist Party of America as well as its reshuffling of officials in the aftermath of the repression of the so-called "Palmer Raids" directed by J. Edgar Hoover. Lore, Jakira, and Gitlow were named to act as Editorial Board for *Voice of Labor* and Lore, Jakira, and Wagenknecht as Editorial Board for *Communist Labor*, both of which publications had a press run of 5,000. (It would be difficult to take seriously any self-cited membership figure for the CLP larger than the press run of the official organ, it might be argued). While a lease was taken out for a National Office, it was determined that the "important business of the office to be conducted elsewhere." If Wagenknecht and Katterfeld were unable to reach preliminary agreement on a basis for unity with the CPA at a preliminary meeting to be held Jan. 24, a 3 person committee was named to meet in Cleveland with prominent CPA members in an apparent parallel effort to forge unity.

## FEBRUARY

**"What Communism Means! Proclamation by the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America"** [circa February 1920] Propaganda leaflet of the Communist Party America issued in the immediate aftermath of the infamous "Palmer Raids" of January 1920. American government reaction against the Communist movement "has outdone the blackest acts of the Tsar in the days of Darkest Russia," the leaflet claims. This reaction came about due to government fear of the Communist Party "because it points out that the 'democratic' parliamentary government is an instrument of the capitalists to deceive and delude the workers," instead arguing that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat ("a working class government") cannot be achieved through the parliamentary process. "The dice are loaded against the workers in the game of electing representatives to Congress and the legislatures to achieve the overthrow of the capitalist system. The capitalists know that, therefore they urge you to rely upon 'constitutional means,'" the leaflet asserts, noting that in Cleveland and New York when push came to shove elected working class officials were simply denied their seats.

The capitalist state backs up its authority with force and violence, as the history of a series of bloody strikes or the carnage of the European war demonstrated, while at the same time demonizing the Communists for advocating the use of the same. “The Communist Party does not advocate the use of what the capitalists call ‘force and violence’ at present. It advocates the organization of the working class to use its mass power against the existing capitalist government and to establish a working class government in its place. If in the final struggle for power force is necessary to achieve the victory of the working class - as history tells us has always been the case in the hour of revolution—the Communists will not hesitate to use it, even as the capitalists now use it against the working class.”

**“The Case Against the Reds,”** by A. Mitchell Palmer. This article, first published in *The Forum* magazine in Feb. 1920, is a valuable glimpse into the mentality of the US Attorney General during the Wilson Administration. Palmer was the driving force behind the wave of anti-radical surveillance and repression that swept the country beginning in the second half of 1919 and hitting a crescendo with the coordinated mass arrests of January 2, 1920. The timing of this article is of particular interest, it being written in the immediate aftermath of the January repressions.

**“Circular Letter to All Federation Secretaries from C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary of the Communist Party of America Regarding Revision of District Territories.”** [Feb. 2, 1920] This is a missing link of sorts, a message from Executive Secretary Ruthenberg specifying an adjustment of the territories of the newly established underground “districts” of the Communist Party of America—material in the Comintern Archive does not seem to include news of this change. The initial 8 district structure is condensed into 6, with the Detroit district merged into the Cleveland district and the St. Louis-Midwestern district merged into the Chicago district. Of these 6 districts, D6 for the “Pacific Coast” remained without a District Organizer and with only a skeletal CPA organization in existence. Footnotes indicate the further revisions made to the district territories of the old CPA. The entire evolution of the district boundaries of the old CPA (1920-21) is now known.

**“Letter to Alfred Wagenknecht in Brooklyn from Bishop William Montgomery Brown in Galion, OH - Feb. 4, 1920.”** The Palmer Raids of January 1920 unleashed a wave of fear among American radicals, as leading figures were jailed, party organizations disrupted, and dissent stifled. Membership rolls plummeted for all organizations of the American left, particularly those of the Communist movement. This letter from “Bad Bishop” William Montgomery Brown to Executive Secretary of the Communist Labor Party Alfred Wagenknecht demonstrates the sort of fear instilled in the left wing public by the secret police terror of the Wilson administration. Brown and his wife, despite professing a continuing belief in Marxian socialism, resign from the CLP with this letter due to “the fact that we are old and feeble and that the feebleness of Mrs. Brown is increased by the fear of my imprisonment.” Brown states that he will again join the organized Communist movement when he can do so without fear of arrest. He encloses “the usual monthly check, but with the distinct understanding that you will

use the money for the promotion of a knowledge of Marxian socialism only, in some way which comes within the boundary of the law and does not pass beyond it. If the Communist Labor Party knows of no such way, please return the check."

**"Radicalism Under Inquiry: Conclusions Reached After a Year's Study of Alien Anarchy in America."** by Sen. Clayton R. Lusk [Feb. 1920] An article published in the

February 1920 issue of *The Review of Reviews* in which the chairman of the New York "Joint Legislative Committee to Investigating Seditious Activities" makes his case. Lusk claimed to have gathered "ample and convincing evidence that the movement had its inception some time prior to the beginning of the world war in 1914, and that it was started here and elsewhere by paid agents of the Junker class in Germany as a part of their program of industrial and military world conquest." After the war this German-sponsored extreme radicalism continued through sheer inertia, in Lusk's view. The radicals could only succeed by demolishing "our national sense of decency and honesty," according to Lusk, and consequently were "conducting definite propaganda against the church and all religions, against the institution of the family, and against all present moral ideals." To combat this menace, the time had come for action, for "drastic laws," and for men in office "who have sufficient moral, physical, and political courage, and the necessary energy to enforce our laws."

**Gitlow Found Guilty.** (*The Toiler*) [event of Feb. 5, 1920] Short news account from the weekly newspaper of the Communist Labor Party detailing the end of CLP leader Ben Gitlow's trial in New York state for "Criminal Anarchism" connected with his role in 1919 in publishing the Left Wing Manifesto in the proto-communist paper *The Revolutionary Age*. Although he did not testify in the trial, former Assemblyman Gitlow was allowed to provide the defense's concluding speech to the jury, the account indicates. Gitlow attempted, with only limited success, to deliver a political speech to the jury, proclaiming "I am a revolutionist" and condemning the world was an an incident which "showed plainly the failure of capitalism." Gitlow's attempts to deliver a propaganda speech were cut short by the judge, who used his gavel to keep Gitlow from straying from the evidence presented in the case. The speech was to no avail and Gitlow was convicted of the charge against him following several hours of jury deliberations, the article indicates.

**"Speech to the Jury,"** by Benjamin Gitlow [Feb. 5, 1920] One of the first American Communists persecuted for his beliefs was Benjamin Gitlow, a New York CLP member and close associate of John Reed. Gitlow was arrested for violation of the New York Criminal Anarchism Law on November 8, 1919, for his role as business manager of *The Revolutionary Age*, in which the Left Wing Manifesto was published. Gitlow's trial began Jan. 22, 1920, and went to the jury on February 5, with Gitlow delivering the speech here in his defense. Gitlow maintained that capitalism was unable to resolve its internal political contradictions and was "in a state of collapse" and the cause of "untold misery and hardships to the working men." Gitlow states that "The socialists have always maintained that the change from capitalism to socialism would be a fundamental change, that is, we would have a complete reorganization of society, that this change would not be a question of reform." The Soviet system established in Russia is lauded as the applicable model for the American future: "The dictatorship of the proletariat is a

new form of organization. It is based on the industrial representation of the worker in industry. Today you have a government called a democracy, which is based on the territorial divisions of the people inhabiting the nations. Under the Soviet form of government, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, this condition is changed. You have a form of government that is based on representation of industry... The worker in industry today is not democratically controlling the affairs of his life, and the socialists maintain that it is the duty of the working class to organize efficiently for the democratic control of industry. And we see that in Russia, where we have the dictatorship of the proletariat, the democratic control of industry has been put into effect."

### **["Radicalism Under Inquiry: Conclusions Reached After a Year's Study of Alien Letter to Alfred Wagenknecht in New York from Charles Dirba in New York, Feb. 9, 1920."](#)**

Official reply of the CPA to the CLP's unity "counterproposal" of Jan. 24, 1920, sent by the CPA's unity committee of 3, headed by Charles Dirba. The CPA's Central Executive Committee discussed the specifics of the CLP proposal and stated (1) that they could not subscribe to a declaration that there were no differences in fundamental principles between the two organizations, but would not object if the CLP chose to make this assertion; (2) That unity must be based not only on the CPA's manifesto and program, but also upon "those parts of the Constitution setting forth the fundamental relationship of Language Federations within the Party"; and (3) that consolidation of executive committees was "positively decided against...as inconsistent with the fundamental principles of the CP" and that "the only road to organic communist unity is a joint convention." Further explanations in a face to face meeting were promised by the CPA committee if so desired by the CLP.

### **[Letter to Alfred Wagenknecht in New York from Walter F. Bronstrup in Cleveland, February 9, 1920.](#)**

This is a delightful personal letter with political content written by the Secretary of Local Cleveland, Communist Labor Party to Executive Secretary Alfred Wagenknecht in the aftermath of the Palmer raids. The letter begins with an account of a trip by the handful of remaining members of the local to Wagenknecht's farm, where his wife Hortense served them a pork roast with all the fixings, with lemon pie for dessert. Bronstrup then moves into political matters: "Local Cleveland is dead, just like all other locals that I hear about and am unable to get any activity. If I call a meeting only a few show up and all they want to know is how are things going in the National Office, when is that unity going to arrive, why do we not receive the CLP News, and a lot of questions that I nor anyone else here can answer." Bronstrup urges an end to secrecy, observing that "A plant can not thrive and grow upon the want of food, neither can an organization grow that is starving for information."

### **[The Question of Unity of the Communist Labor Party and the Communist Party. \(The Toiler\)](#)**

[events of Dec. 16, 1919 to Feb. 14, 1920] Official published account of the Communist Labor Party of America about its unity dance with the rival Communist Party of America, dating from an unofficial inquiry about unity prospects from the CPA's German Federation Secretary Fritz Friedman to a formal meeting of 3 person negotiating committees on February 14. The CLP, as is typical, casts itself as the unflinching advocates of immediate unity on the basis of organizational equality and contends that not only a majority of the rank-and-file of each organization were in favor of such a position, but also a minority of the Executive Committee of

the CPA. Unfortunately, the CLP contends, a majority of the CPA Executive, consisting of “five or six individuals,” stood as the sole obstacle to unity. When the CPA insisted upon adoption of its manifesto, constitution, and program as the basis for a unity convention, the CLP countered with a proposal noting it impossible for either constitution to be used in the post-Palmer Raids political environment, accepting the CPA’s manifesto and program as a basis for a unity convention, and calling for immediate merger of the Executive Committees, National Offices, and defense work of the two organizations, with the all-important federation question to be decided by the convention, it is intimated. This counter-proposal was not answered by the CPA, the CLP indicates, with the latter organization learning of its rejection only from an article published in the CPA press.

### **Query of ‘Where Is John Reed?’ Answered: Shipped to Norway, Then Turned**

**Stowaway.** (*The Toiler*) [Feb. 22, 1920] Readers of the Communist Labor Party’s legal weekly, *The Toiler*, are regaled with the exploits of the CLP’s man in Moscow, journalist John Reed in this summary report detailing “what the US government has officially learned so far.” Reed, under indictment in Chicago along with other CLP leaders in connection with the founding convention of the CLP held in that city the previous summer, had gone missing and was the subject of a nationwide search, the *Toiler* report indicates. Reed had surfaced in Moscow where he had attended and addressed official meetings of the Third International and the 7th All-Russian Congress of Soviets, the news account states, having shipped to Norway as a seaman and stowed away from Stockholm to Helsinki, Finland, where he crossed the frontier disguised as a peasant. Of historical note is the article’s claim that Reed’s famous appointment by Trotsky as Bolshevik Consul General in New York was merely a pretext “made to facilitate his return to the United States.”

**“The Party Outlook: Unsigned Editorial in *Communist Labor*, Feb. 25, 1920.”** This document appeared in the official organ of the Communist Labor Party, outlining the various members of the CLP arrested during the coordinated raids of January 2, 1920. Thousands were arrested and hundreds held—with 8 deaths of arrestees held at Ellis Island. “Instructions to the raiders were that only alien radicals were to be arrested,” the article notes. The CLP indicates that it took care of its own, freeing the big majority of its members of bail. In addition to the New York arrests, a large effort against the CLP and its national officers was underway in Illinois, it was indicated, with indictments coming down for the Cook Co. Executive Committee, the National Executive Committee of the CLP, and others. “One thing is assured. We shall not be intimidated. The purpose of the raids was to cow the workers. The Red Raids will have the opposite effect,” the editorial defiantly states.

**“Letter to Alfred Wagenknecht in New York from Charles Dirba in New York, Feb. 26, 1920.”** Owing to the disruption of the mails and the arrest of Executive Secretary of the CPA Ruthenberg in Detroit and subsequent detention in Chicago, the Feb. 9, 1920 letter of the CPA replying to the CLP’s Jan. 24, 1920 unity counterproposal was not received, nor could the CPA reply to a testy CLP inquiry. This Feb. 26 letter from Acting Executive Secretary of the CPA Charles Dirba repeats the content of the undelivered Feb. 9 letter: (1) that the statement of no differences of principle could not be agreed to; (2) That unity must be based on the CPA’s

Language Federation structure; and (3) That merger of Executive Committees was rejected out of hand and that a joint convention was the only path to organic unity. The CLP was invited to publish correspondence on the unity discussion as they had threatened to do, with Dirba noting that the CPA had already done so itself.

## MARCH

**Miners of America! Resist the Terrors of Your Masters!** [March 1920] Full text of a rare leaflet directed at coal miners ahead of a scheduled April 1 strike, published by the Communist Party of America. “You should serve notice on the mine barons that not one ton of coal will ever be mined until the mine guard system is destroyed and a standard of living fit for human beings guaranteed you by the barons,” the leaflet proclaims. Rank and file miners are instructed to keep a careful eye on the union functionaries claiming to represent them, for just as they had previously “deserted and betrayed the Kansas miners who were fighting the Industrial Court Law of that mental eunuch and moral pervert, Gov. Henry Allen of Kansas, so they will betray you unless you make sure you can intimidate them so they will not dare betray you.” The leaflet demands: “You must fight these organizations of the state and national governments for they are your mortal enemies. You cannot resist the power of the army by armed force for the simple reason that you haven’t the equipment to fight with, but you can prevent them entering the coal fields if you CAN REACH THE RAILROAD WORKERS WITH YOUR MESSAGE AND CONVINCE THEM THAT TO RUN TRAINS CARRYING CONSTABULARY OR MILITIAMEN OR SOLDIERS IS AN ACT OF TREACHERY TO THE WORKING CLASS.”

**“Rules for Underground Party Work.”** (leaflet of the CPA) [circa March 1920] Full text of the often-reprinted “rules for underground party work– issued as a leaflet by the Communist Party of America. The leaflet includes commentary on the following 10 “rules” of conduct for party members: “(1) DON’T betray Party work and Party workers under any circumstances. (2) DON’T carry or keep with you names and addresses, except in good code. (3) DON’T keep in your rooms openly any incriminating documents or literature. (4) DON’T take any unnecessary risks in Party work. (5) DON’T shirk Party work because of the risk connected with it. (6) DON’T boast of what you have to do or have done for the Party. (7) DON’T divulge your membership in the Party without necessity. (8) DON’T let any spies follow you to appointments or meetings. (9) DON’T lose your nerve in danger. (10) DON’T answer any questions if arrested, either at preliminary hearings or in the court.” The leaflet firmly advises those arrested to take advantage of the right to remain silent: “I you are arrested, ...if they have sufficient evidence, or sufficient grounds for suspicion, that you are a Communist, and therefore, as a deathly enemy of the present order, subject to suppression and imprisonment, law or no law—but first to be made use of in getting hold of other Communists, in destroying the whole organization, if possible—first to be questioned and grilled, to be pumped for various information, to be put through the Third Degree—then the only correct thing to do, the best thing in the circumstances, is absolute refusal to answer any questions. (Ask for a lawyer. You have the right for that. And you have the right to refuse to answer questions, whatever that may help you.)”

**"Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from the National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party in New York, March 9, 1920."** Reply by Executive Secretary of the CLP Alfred Wagenknecht to the Charles Dirba's letter of Feb. 26, 1920, which dealt a severe blow to the discussions over unity between the two rival American Communist organizations. The CLP "learns with regret" that the CPA "has again refused the opportunity to unite all Communist forces in the United States under one banner," Wagenknecht writes. He rightly notes that "The form of language federations has been one of the essential points of difference between the two parties," adding that "a small clique through their control of the autonomous federation groups controlled by the Communist Party convention in Chicago [Sept. 1919] prevented unity of all the Communist elements there." Wagenknecht appeals over the heads of the CPA's CEC to the membership of that organization directly, asking them to "enforce their will" on the question of organizational unity. "If we wait six months, if we first go through a long period of steamroller building and wire-pulling to control convention delegates..., if we now once more build TWO Communist organizations until they become set and rigid, and then pit them against each other in a convention, a unity of Communist forces will be almost impossible to attain," Wagenknecht warns.

**"To the Russian Workers in America Relative to Recent Raids and Arrests: Proclamation of the Chicago District Committee of Russian Branches, CLP."**

[published March 11, 1920] The early American Communist movement is sometimes simplistically viewed as divided between the "Foreign Federations" of the Communist Party of America and the "American and English-speaking" Communist Labor Party. In reality, the latter organization included substantial foreign language contingents, including in particular Russian and Croatian speakers from the Midwest. This is a Proclamation by the CLP's powerful Chicago District Committee of Russian Branches, published in the organization's Russian-language organ and saved from oblivion from the US Department of Justice. The manifesto declares that the recent anti-Red raids by the government were a calculated diversion to distract attention from American intervention in Soviet Russia: "The most backward American workers now know that the 'heroes' of the present raids are nothing but thieves, who run before the mob shouting, 'stop, thief!' so as to divert the people's attention from themselves." In the face of continued repression, the CLP Russian Federation remains defiant: "We are ready to moisten with our blood every step forward towards liberation from capitalist slavery, just like our glorious Fatherland, the Red Russian Revolution, is doing. We are prepared to experience all the sufferings and trials which the American Bashibuzuks (roughnecks) are preparing for us. But we will not give in!"

**"Letter to the National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party in New York from the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York, March 19, 1920."** Reply by Executive Secretary of the old CPA C.E. Ruthenberg to the March 9, 1920 letter of the CLP on unity. Ruthenberg announces that the CPA is intent upon unity on the terms which it previously dictated, and that to this end it was beginning the process of delegate selection for a unity convention to be held "at the earliest possible date and not later than June 15th [1920]." A Joint Convention Committee of 3 had been named by the CPA with the intention of meeting a like committee from the CLP, to work towards a unity convention on the following terms: "(1) The joint call for the convention must include our

Manifesto, Program, and constitutional relations of the Federations to the Party. (2) Apportionment of delegates on the basis of dues stamps sold by each organization for the months of October, November, and December [1919], the total number of delegates from both organizations not to exceed 35. Books of both organizations to be open to the opposite committee members. (3) The election of delegates to be by membership action and to be conducted secretly and to be as nearly as possible alike for the two organizations. (4) The quorum to call the convention to order to consist of two-thirds of the delegates elected by each organization." Ruthenberg states "If your committee really desires unity between the Communists of the United States and is not merely using the plea to unity as a convenient method of propaganda against the Communist Party of America, we trust you will take immediate favorable action on this proposal and elect your convention committee."

**"Message from the Amsterdam Sub-Bureau of the Comintern to the American Communist Movement, March 20, 1920."** A sympathetic message to the Communists of America sent by the Executive Committee of the short-lived Amsterdam Sub-Bureau of the Communist International and published in the party press. The letter rather melodramatically likens the persecution being suffered by the American movement to that of the Russian revolutionaries under the Tsarist regime and links it to a forthcoming final battle against world capitalism: "Nothing short of the fall of American Capitalism will mean the end of that gigantic historical drama of which the world war seems to have been the prologue. The ruling classes of America know this, and that is why they try to crush Communism before it has taken hold of the masses; they want to violently tear it out, before it has deeply struck root into the American soil." According to the letter, it is the task of the American Communists to preserve their party organization and "to carry on, on broader lines, the task that the IWW first took in hand, to lead the masses against capitalism; to become the nucleus, the heart and the brain, of a stronger and more determined working class movement."

**"Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America, March 17-19, 1920"** Minutes for the monthly plenum of the Central Executive Committee of the old CPA, the last peaceful gathering before the explosion at the April meeting when Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg and his associates headed for the exits. The March 1920 session dealt extensively with the question of unity with the CLP. After hearing a presentation by a representative of the Comintern calling for unity, the CEC proceeded to reject the latest proposal of the CLP, contained in a March 9, 1920 letter from CLP Executive Secretary Alfred Wagenknecht on behalf of the NEC of his party. The CPA counteroffers its readiness to immediately proceed to merger, so long as the CLP accepts: the program of the CPA, the constitution of the CPA, the relationship of the Federations to the National Office employed by the CPA. A unity convention with 35 delegates is called for, with elections based proportionally between the two organizations upon dues stamps sold for Oct.-Dec. 1919 — not accidentally a peak period for the CPA. The CPA is also graciously willing to merge its (larger) CEC with that of the CLP during the transition period. Not surprisingly, this one-sided offer was not accepted by the CLP. The March CEC session also saw the resignation of I.E. Ferguson from the CEC and his role as party editor over a refusal of the CEC to discipline Nicholas Hourwich and "Ries" for misrepresenting the decisions of the CEC in an attempt to raise funds for a Hourwich trip to Soviet Russia. Ferguson remained on as party counsel and was directed to start a Chicago Defense Committee on behalf of the CPA.

**“Protest Letter Regarding Jay Lovestone to the CEC of the Communist Party of America from the CPA’s Boston District Organization, March 24, 1920..”** Jay

Lovestone’s coy and unilluminating testimony as a witness subpoenaed by the prosecution in the trial of Harry Winitzky was not well received by many in the ranks of the Communist Party of America, as this heated protest from the Boston District Organization to the national office amply attests. Lovestone is charged with having made statements on the stand in direct contradiction to the manifesto and program of the CPA: “At a time when all activity of the party is in abeyance, when the membership is burning with the desire to place the truth about capitalism and, in particular, about the Communist Party before the American working class — in which work they are sadly left without assistance both by their leaders and their officials — it is necessary that no one regarded as a spokesman for the party be allowed to manipulate party principles to suit his own wishes.” The Boston organization charged that Lovestone’s testimony was the result either of “ignorance, irresponsibility, or cowardice” and demanded his immediate removal from the Central Executive Committee and the National Council of the CPA.

**“Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from the National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party in New York, March 25, 1920.”** Reply by Executive Secretary of the CLP Alfred Wagenknecht to

the March 19, 1920 letter on unity by the CPA. Wagenknecht reaffirms the CLP’s unity stance, emphasizing in particular their position that the question of language federation structure would have to be decided by the unity convention from scratch. “If we understand your position upon this point, it is that you wish us to go into convention with you with the admission that your form of language federation organization is correct and dares us to attack and change it. In other words, you hold the fort and we are invited to make the attack. Your constitutional form of language federations has already broken down and has been eliminated in great part by the new [underground] methods you have been forced to adopt to prosecute Communist work. You are violating your own constitutional form of language federation. Why ask us to accept it as a basis for a convention call when you recognize it as obsolete?” Wagenknecht asks, adding that the CLP does not insist upon non-autonomous federations, only that the question “go before the convention without prejudice.”

**“Report on CPA Sub-District 4-C [Detroit] to Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg from SDO “E.A. Carroll.” March 25, 1920..”** This report of the Detroit Sub-District Organizer

of the Communist Party of America is an interesting source of local detail. The situation is difficult, the yet-unidentified SDO “Carroll” remarks, noting that “all English locals in Michigan are infested with the Proletarian Party stuff.” The matter is made more difficult by the SDO’s absolute lack of concrete information about the source of the split between the CPA and the Michigan Proletarian University group: “I must immediately have a copy of the controversy in detail which took place in the NEC in regard to the expulsion of the Michiganites. I was up to Bay City yesterday. They have an English Local of six members to whom I talked and convinced that we must have the new form of organization but before they will decide to cast their lot with us they insist on wanting to know why [the Michigan Proletarian University people] were ousted by the CEC. I was unable to give them a proper answer because I am not familiar with what happened myself. Please send a report of this in detail with argument at once. I

cannot get along on the next trip without it." The move towards mass expulsions of the supporters of the Michigan group had been set in motion by the CPA's CEC at its Nov. 17, 1919 meeting, due to the Proletarian University's routing of speakers around the country independent of the CEC and the advocacy by these speakers of the "Michigan program" in opposition to the program of the CPA.

**"Circular Letter on Transfer of Party Funds, to CPA Federation and District**

**Organizers from Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg, March 25, 1920."**

Extremely short and rather esoteric memo to DOs of the newly underground Communist Party of America which indicates (1) that dues were transmitted from the various DOs to the center by means of blank bank drafts payable to "James T. Browning" and (2) that illegal leaflets were distributed en masse on a single assigned day.

**"On Killing Us Dead: Unsigned Editorial in Communist Labor, March 25, 1920."**

Still reeling from J. Edgar Hoover's coordinated anti-communist police raids of January 2, 1920 (the so-called "Palmer Raids"), the Communist Labor Party trumpets the fact of its survival with this snide editorial advising the adoption of the full fledged Tsarist model for repression of political dissent. Expanded espionage, censorship, and legal repression is mockingly advocated, as is an attack on libraries and public education, and an expansion of the ranks of the army and the role of the secret police apparatus held up as a model worthy for emulation. "Never mind the growing wrath of the 'underdogs,' the editorialist declares. "Don't look too far into the future or weigh the result of drastic Russianization, per pre-Soviet days, of the United States. Never mind the consequences. Don't take your lessons from recent occurrences in Russia."

**"Debs Does Not Know: Unsigned Editorial in Communist Labor, March 25, 1920."**

In March 1920 came news from Atlanta Federal Penitentiary that imprisoned radical leader Gene Debs had agreed to stand as the Presidential nominee of the Socialist Party for the fifth time. This was most unwelcome information to the rival Communist Labor Party, including among its ranks many longtime allies of Debs in the left wing of the SPA. This article blames Debs' decision to run as a Socialist upon imperfect information. Cut off from the radical press by prison bars, only direct contact could impart information about the rapidly evolving world radical movement. With the likes of *New York Call* journalist and Debs biographer David Karsner the ones imparting such information, Debs' resulting loyalty to the moribund SPA was entirely predictable, the writer of this article intimates. At the same time, an initial effort is made to undercut Debs' iconic position in the American radical movement. "Will Debs eventually be found with the American Scheidemanns, who appeal to the workers in time of personal distress, in times when these Scheidemanns are attacked by the more reactionary bourgeoisie?" the writer asks. "Will Debs eventually be found with the Schneidemanns who subdue the workers with shot and shell when the Scheidemanns are in the saddle?"

**"Casualties: Unsigned News Report in Communist Labor, March 25, 1920."**

Across America the forces of law and order put a full court press on the nascent American communist

movement in late 1919 and early 1920. This repressive effort was not limited to non-citizens, as this unsigned article from the official organ of the Communist Labor Party demonstrates. Among those included in this blotter of "casualties in the class war" were native born radicals Ruby McSlarrow Herman, acting State Secretary of the Communist Labor Party of Washington, Anita Whitney of California, attorney Marguerite Prevey of Ohio, and Dr. O.J. Brown of Chicago. Others mentioned in this report include Ludwig Lore of the New York Volkszeitung, N. Juel Christensen of the Scandinavian Socialist Federation, Dr. Karl Sandburg of Chicago, Max Bedacht and Jack Carney of the CLP's National Executive Committee, Harry Petzold of New Jersey, Julius Soos and Jack Campbell of North Carolina, and a certain Comrade Oster from Oregon. Virtually all of these were jailed under state laws for "criminal anarchy," "criminal syndicalism," or "conspiracy."

### **[Letter to Rose Ruthenberg in Cleveland from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York City, March 25, 1920.](#)**

**[March 25, 1920.](#)** This surprisingly revelatory letter from Communist Party of America Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg to his wife in Cleveland reveals that portrayals of his wife as apolitical and abandoned in this period are incorrect. Indeed, Rose Ruthenberg was handling the CPA's banking in Cleveland! This letter details the transfer of 10 checks totaling \$1650. "The account is growing too big," Ruthenberg notes to his wife, and she is instructed to withdraw \$2,000, laundering it through "The Co-Operators Company" before being deposited in the "Society for Savings" account. Rose Ruthenberg's discontent with the living arrangement is apparent, with C.E. reassuring her: "I know things are not pleasant for you as they are, and I assure you I would much rather be living quietly at home than to be in my present situation. But what can we do about it? So keep up your courage my dear and make the best of it for the present, and we'll hope that the future will bring something better."

### **["Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from the National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party in New York, March 28, 1920."](#)**

**[New York, March 28, 1920.](#)** In the last days before the April split of the Ruthenberg faction, unity negotiations between the CPA and the CLP were edging towards agreement on agenda with regards to the bitterly divisive question of the role of federations as well as delegate composition. From a previous position seeking direct 1-to-1 parity among delegates and treating CPA-style autonomy of language federations as unacceptable on a per se basis, the CLP had shifted to a position of willingness to discuss the federation question as an open one at a forthcoming unity question, and agreeing to accept its place as the minority faction among delegates. A 35 delegate convention split 15 (CLP) to 20 (CPA) was formally proposed here by the NEC of the CLP. This split was widened still further in face-to-face negotiations to 12 (CLP) to 23 (CPA). The three member negotiating committees were to return to their respective executive committees for decision on this revised delegate allocation.

### **["Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York from Leonid Belsky in Chicago, March 28, 1920."](#)**

**[1920.](#)** This extremely important letter from Chicago District Organizer Leonid Belsky ["Ed Fisher"] to Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg demonstrates that it was not Ruthenberg's personal dissatisfaction with the pace of unity negotiations with the Communist Labor Party or sudden aversion to the nature or tactics of the component language federations of the CPA that

prompted the April 1920 party split, but rather that this break was the result of factional war within the party with volition coming from the Chicago organization, not Ruthenberg. DO Belsky notes that the Chicago District Organization “unanimously decided to get rid of Andrew’s [Nicholas Hourwich’s] gang. No more funds to be sent to NY, a reorganization conference will be called by us, consisting of the representatives of all Districts and all Federations for the purpose of election of a Reorganization Committee to conduct the business of the Party and to call a Convention IMMEDIATELY.” Nor was this an anglophonic revolt against non-english speakers, as the Russian Federationist Belsky indicates “We are unanimous in the whole [Chicago] District and have the whole Polish and South Slavic Federations with us, also Russian, Jewish, and other District Organizations, which decided not to send any funds to their Federation Executive Committees.” Nor was the idea to bolt and abscond with the CPA’s party fund’s the original idea of Ruthenberg, as Belsky demands “We expect you to bring the funds on hand and all the important documents to Chicago. You are the Executive Secretary and your duty is to save the property of the Party from the criminal gang, which has at the present the upper hand and which must be swept by the loyal rank and file and thrown out of the Party.”

**[“Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York from I.E. Ferguson in Chicago, March 31, 1920.”](#)** Another important early letter shedding light upon the April 1920 CPA split. Ferguson, regarded as Ruthenberg’s closest political associate in this period, clearly was not the source of anger and action against the CPA’s CEC majority, writing (in contrast to Chicago DO Belsky’s March 28 letter): “ I am glad there is rebellion against the CEC, that goes without saying; but I have yet no fixed opinion about how it should proceed, and I will hold any opinion open until I have discussed the situation with you. One thing I hope, that if there is something in the nature of a complete repudiation of the CEC that you will not stand as the defender of the Hourwichites. That would be a calamity to the party. If a break must come — and I am not at all sure it is inevitable — I certainly hope you will not raise the loyalty banner in behalf of those who have engendered the revolt.” This document further illustrates that it was not Ruthenberg who premeditated and caused the 1920 split, but rather that the division was a byproduct of the feud between the Chicago organization (headed by DO Belsky) with the CEC majority of Nicholas Hourwich and his associates, as well as the emerging factional politics of the CEC itself.

**[“Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from Alfred Wagenknecht, Executive Secretary of the Communist Labor Party of America in New York, March 31, 1920.”](#)** Having capitulated on the big issue of the relationship of the language federations to the central organization of the new party and the question of organizational parity at a forthcoming joint unity convention, the National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party squabbles over one last delegate, refusing the CPA’s proposed split of 12 (CLP) to 23 (CPA) in favor of a “final” decision of 13 (CLP) to 22 (CPA). The Joint Convention Committee is authorized to proceed with arrangements for a unity convention only if the CPA caves in on this point, CLP Executive Secretary Alfred Wagenknecht notes.

## APRIL

**“A Yankee Convention,”** by Robert Minor. [April 1920] In this article from the pages of *The Liberator*, Communist Party leader Robert Minor expresses excitement over the growth of the cooperative movement in America, not so much for that trend’s ability to lead to the long-run liberation of the working class, but for its ability to bring together farmers and the urban working class in a common cause. Minor here reports on the Cooperative Congress, a national convention bringing together cooperative operators, farmers’ groups, labor unions, and the Plumb Plan League. Although the gathering formally banned the discussion of politics from its proceedings, Minor emphasizes the potential political importance of the cooperative system, particularly as a provisioner of striking workers. Includes several drawings by Minor of key participants of the gathering.

**“Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York from I.E. Ferguson in Chicago.”** [April 11, 1920]

This letter to Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg from his friend and factional ally, I.E. “Ed” Ferguson, demonstrates that Ruthenberg’s decision to split from the organization was not a hasty action taken in response to a refusal of Federationist elements to unite with the anglophonic Communist Labor Party (as Draper and his followers would have it ), but rather was the result of a whole complex of factors. Ferguson is frustrated at Ruthenberg for continuing to temporize with the “4 ridiculous people” who constituted the majority of the CEC of the CPA, whom he characterizes as individuals “who could never possibly be anything but barriers to Communist organization in this country.” “Have we not, you and I, yielded already far too much to an empty standard of party regularity—when there is neither party nor regularity to take into account?” Ferguson asks. The Chicago organization should defy the CEC and refuse to accept an instruction that 3 of its top leaders should proceed to New York for a scolding. Ferguson declares that “the CP was mostly a fake organization, that is the rock-bottom truth. Very few of its members knew what it was about at all. It was not the outcome of agitation about Socialism, not the outcome of education, not the outcome of class fighting in the US. These things it was only in slight degree. Essentially the CP was a hip-hip-hurrah society for celebration of good news from Russia.” This group is headed by “Russian-Jewish politicians” trumpeting a phoney “4-flush of Bolshevism” in order to maintain their employment, in Ferguson’s view. “I am firmly convinced that you are doing yourself a great injustice without really furthering a Communist movement by sticking to the CEC—the dead ‘leading body’ of a dead organization,” Ferguson insists. “The Federation members have never paid much attention to the CEC of the party, except to shell out money in a vague sort of way. The CEC means nothing to them now. Outside the Federations there is hardly anything left of the CP. Now what is there in this situation for you to save?” Ferguson asks Ruthenberg to “get down to modest realities. There are a few thousand members ready in the US for a Communist Party, perhaps 10,000 in the whole country, though this is likely too big a figure.... I would only count the Federations in so far as they contain individuals who want to belong to a party, not to a social club of their own language—say about 10% of the Federation membership.” The CLP is no better, in Ferguson’s estimation, but in the IWW he sees as a more significant organization. Ferguson calls on Ruthenberg to dispense with the old organization, to call a convention and build a new, Federation-free party around the 2,000 member Chicago organization. “You have become the pivot of this whole situation. You must act, which means a kicking overboard of all this old rubbishy nonsense and irritation; or you do not act, which means simply a

postponement of the day of reckoning." A real party "cannot be achieved through the combination of two dead organizations, both infested with the poison of self-seeking 'leadership.'" An altogether new organization is needed, Ferguson believes.

**"Joint Call for the Communist Convention."** [composed by the CPA, transmitted to the CLP on April 7, 1920] In addition to a five day ultimatum regarding the size and composition of the delegations to a forthcoming Joint Unity Convention to unite the rival Communist Party of America with the rival Communist Labor Party, the CPA included the following language for a joint call. The primacy of the CPA's doctrine was made clear, with the Manifesto and Program of the CPA designated as the basis for work by the convention on a revised Manifesto and Program. Delegate elections were to be secret and of similar method between the groups, under the nominal supervision of the 6 member Joint Convention Committee. The Joint Convention Committee was also to supervise convention arrangements, subject to control of the CEC of the CPA and the NEC of the CLP.

**"Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, April 7, 1920."** With a split of the CPA between the Chicago organization and the New York-based CEC majority fairly clearly in the cards, Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg writes to Chicago DO Belsky to announce whether or not he would actively support the revolt (his statement to the CEC not included with the archival document). Ruthenberg writes: "I have written my statement so that it will make a propaganda appeal against the majority and I suggest that you prepare to have it printed in various languages so that we can go to the membership at once IF THE BREAK COMES. I am placing myself in your hands by sending this statement to you and am trusting to you to take no action and make no use of it unless the other side precipitates matters by an attempt to remove you." Alex Bittelman had been delegated by the CEC majority to come to Chicago as plenipotentiary, Ruthenberg notes, although whether Bittelman would actually attempt to decapitate the Chicago party organization was still unclear. "It may be that the majority of the council will be so foolhardy as to attempt to remove me as Executive Secretary and Acting Party Editor when they receive my statement. Such action would of course precipitate matters at once," Ruthenberg notes.

**"Letter to the Central Executive Committee and Joint Convention Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from Alfred Wagenknecht, Executive Secretary of the Communist Labor Party in New York, April 9, 1920."** CLP Executive Secretary Alfred Wagenknecht takes umbrage at the five day ultimatum regarding a forthcoming Joint Unity Convention delivered to him by the rival Communist Party of America. "You presume to dictate a new representation for the convention to us," Wagenknecht complains. "You presume to dictate to use the form and wording of the joint call." The ultimatum therefore "seems to breathe, not a spirit of unity but a passion for dictatorial control." Wagenknecht complains that the entire NEC and Convention Committee is outside of New York and that no physical meeting would be possible within the arbitrary five day deadline, adding that the CPA had taken 9 days to answer the CLP's most recent proposal. Includes a detailed analysis of the faction fight within the CEC of the rival CPA following the receipt of this communication.

### **The Lesson of Albany: An Editorial from *The Toiler*, by Elmer T. Allison [April 9, 1920]**

Coming to finish one day after any legal possibility of new elections to fill their denied seats (not accidentally), the end of the so-called "trial" of the five Socialist Assemblymen is celebrated in this editorial in the legal weekly newspaper of the underground Communist Labor Party. "It is folly to feel remorseful at this blow directed at the principle of representative government," writes editor Elmer Allison, "Rather may we feel grateful that the hand of the buccaneers has been brought into view and the class character of capitalist government shown up so glaringly." Allison argues that the Socialist Party, instead of tailoring its appeal to "the court of last resort -- the working class" had instead tried to curry favor with the ruling class parties in Albany. "They attempted to barter their revolutionary soul for a mess of pottage — and didn't get it," Allison colorfully remarks. The entire tactic of parliamentary action, long criticized by the Left Wing, had been exposed and discredited, since "the present state is a machine for the perpetuation of capitalism and could not be used for the production of anything else even though the workers should be successful at the elections." Now the working class "must now swing to the Left — for there is nowhere else they can go," Allison optimistically declares.

### **"Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York from Leonid Belsky in Chicago, April 10, 1920."**

With CPA Executive Secretary's Ruthenberg's ultimatum to the CEC majority in hand, Chicago DO Belsky writes back to reassure him: "Your stand is clear and excellent and without doubt will voice the opinion of the membership throughout the country. I will follow your suggestions in every respect and you can count on the unanimous support of our district. Am awaiting your further communications in regard to the action of the CEC following the presentation of your statement. WE WILL TAKE NO ACTION unless YOU WOULD INITIATE IT." Belsky notes that the Chicago District organization was engaged in unity negotiations with the rival Communist Labor Party on their own: "We are making very strenuous efforts for reaching an organizational unity with the CLP in our territory and I believe they finally will join us and support our every move, including a call for similar unity action throughout the country, regardless of their NEC. We had two conferences, in which we have succeeded in splitting them, getting the best and most active of their committee with us."

### **"Letter to Rose Ruthenberg in Cleveland from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York City, April 12, 1920."**

In this letter home, CPA Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg is troubled by his forthcoming trial on charges of having violated New York's "Criminal Anarchism" law—taking an automobile road trip to view Sing Sing Prison—and discouraged about the future of the CPA. The organization is "running behind every month" financially, C.E. notes, and he finds little interest in living in New York City away from his wife and son. He looks to "get out" of the organization and wonders aloud whether he can find a job after his time as a party functionary. He is disconsolate about the organization seemingly "going smash" and seems in no mood to wade through an endless string of "personal squabbles" in coming months. "Although I cannot say definitely what will happen and that the conditions will be such that I will quit, the feeling is growing on me." Ruthenberg would ultimately bolt the organization with a handful of co-thinkers at a session of the Central Executive Committee held less than a week later.

**"Partial Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America."** [April 15-19, 1920] Official "majority faction" account of the April 1920 split by C.E. Ruthenberg, Leonid Belsky, and Croatian Federation leader "Wood" from the Communist Party of America. Since Ruthenberg kept the original minutes and removed them when he bolted the organization, the version here was reconstituted from memory by his successor as Executive Secretary of the CPA, Charles Dirba. The plenum opened with a battle over what the majority claimed were biased minutes of the previous meeting composed by Ruthenberg, with extensive corrections made. The Ruthenberg minority is then said to have delivered some unspecified "ultimatum" to the majority, threatening the organization with a split — reading between the lines the primary matter of contention seems to have related to the CEC majority's insistence upon removing Ruthenberg faction leaders Belsky and "Wood" from their posts as District Organizers, with dissatisfaction over the pace of unity negotiations with the rival CLP probably also factoring into the equation. Negotiations between the two sides were said to have been conducted from Thursday, April 15 through the morning of Sunday, April 18, ending in failure. At that point an effort was made to resume the meeting of the full CEC, which Ruthenberg refused to join, declaring that he refused to recognize the committee's authority. The meeting was called to order nevertheless by Dirba and those wishing to leave were invited to do so, prompting the withdrawal of Ruthenberg, Jay Lovestone, and Alex Georgian of CEC; William Reynolds of the Estonian Federation, Fritz Friedman of the German Federation, Joseph Kowalski of the Polish Federation, and District Organizers Marion Sproule (Boston), "Wood" (Cleveland), "Davey" (Pittsburgh), and Belsky (Chicago). Alexander Bittelman also submitted his resignation from the CEC without stating a reason but remained at the session without participating, pending decision on his resignation by the CPA's Executive Council. The balance of the session was spent naming committees to explain the split to the CPA's membership, restructuring the organization to combine the Cleveland and Pittsburgh Districts under the supervision of new DO John Ballam, and the naming of new members to the Joint Convention Committee negotiating unity with the rival CLP.

**"Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York from Charles Dirba in New York, April 18, 1920."** On April 18, 1920, Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg and a handful of close associates walked out of the meeting of the CPA's Central Executive Committee. This note from new Acting Executive Secretary Charles Dirba to Ruthenberg passes on a resolution passed by the meeting: "To instruct Acting Secretary Bunte [Dirba] to send to the Executive Secretary request to notify us in writing whether he will recognize the authority of the Central Executive Committee. If not, we demand of him to turn over all property of the Communist Party - records, funds, etc. - to the Acting Secretary for the Central Executive Committee."

**"Letter to Rose Ruthenberg in Cleveland from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York City, April 19, 1920."** C.E. Ruthenberg reveals details of the split of the Communist Party of America to his wife in Cleveland. CPA dues checks totaling about \$870, made payable to a false name for security reasons, are included in the letter, together with instructions for their disposition. C.E. again asserts his weariness with the factional warfare, declaring, "I am sick and tired of the whole business and only wish I could drop out without leaving people who are depending on me in the lurch." He promises to quit the party within four weeks and looks forward to a summer of

freedom before his trial for "Criminal Anarchism" in New York state begins in the fall. "I would like nothing better than to come home right away and let them squabble as long as they want, but I have the party money and I have certain responsibility, and I could not quit at this moment without shirking that responsibility," Ruthenberg remarks.

### **["Letter from Leonid Belsky in Chicago to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, April 20, 1920."](#)**

**"Letter from Leonid Belsky in Chicago to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, April 20, 1920."** This brief letter from Chicago DO Belsky to factional leader C.E. Ruthenberg notes that the faction's manifesto ["Make the Party a 'Party of Action'"] was in the hands of the printer, with the manifesto to be published in 6 languages: English, Russian, Lithuanian, Polish, Yiddish, and Croatian. The Chicago District Executive Committee had unanimously endorsed the April split of the CPA and a Chicago District convention of the Russian Federation had been held and done likewise, severing themselves from the national CPA Russian Federation and going so far as to expel Alexander Stoklitsky and "Kaplan" from the organization.

### **["Letter to Alfred Wagenknecht in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, April 22, 1920."](#)**

**"Letter to Alfred Wagenknecht in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, April 22, 1920."** Formal notification to the Executive Secretary of the Communist Labor Party that a split has taken place in the ranks of the CPA. Ruthenberg claims his group has the allegiance of the Polish, South Slavic [Yugoslav], Ukrainian, German, and Estonian Federations of the CPA, as well as four of seven district organizers; that the Jewish Federation of the CPA has withdrawn support to the majority group of the CEC and declared its neutrality; and that "all the evidence goes to show that the larger part of the party will be united in our group." He invites CLP participation in a unity convention and indicates that "prompt action" is needed.

### **["Circular Letter on Unity Negotiations to All Groups of the Communist Labor Party from the CLP National Office in New York."](#)** [April 23, 1920]

This mimeographed memo updates the membership of the Communist Labor Party on the progress of discussions with the rival Communist Party of America. The first unity discussion took place on Jan. 24, 1920 in New York. According to the memo, "The CLP held that the CP constitution and organizational form was impossible, that we were absolutely opposed to language federation autonomy." The memo indicates that this issue was paramount since "the CP has always been in the control of a language federation bloc, which in turn was in control of half a dozen careerists, who held it more important to cut our careers for themselves than to build a strong Communist movement." Fearing an alliance against them between the anglophonic elements in the CPA and the CLP in a united organization, the federationist element of the CPA launched a preemptive strike: "So they began discharging district officials not in harmony with their control policy. The minority upon the CP Central Executive Committee [Ruthenberg group] objected to such discharges, but as the careerist majority on this committee insisted, the minority split away. From what we can gain at this time, both factions in this split are about evenly divided in regard to membership backing, both claim to be the CP, and both will hold conventions." It is noted by the CLP National Office that "At this writing, communications seeking unity with the CLP are on hand from both factions of the CP."

### **["Search Warrants and Prosecutions: The Activities of the New York "Lusk Committee," by Archibald E. Stevenson."](#)** [April 24, 1920]

A section from the introduction to

the 1920 report of the “Lusk Committee.” Chief Investigator Stevenson provides a useful list of dates and activities of the Lusk Committee—searches, seizures, arrests, and prosecutions—conducted in connection with the Committee’s legislative mandate to enforce the New York “Criminal Anarchism Act.” This series of events was initiated on June 12, 1919, with a warrant served against the Russian Soviet Government Bureau, headed by Ludwig C.A.K. Martens, and subsequently included raids against offices of the Rand School of Social Science, the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party, the Russian Socialist Federation, and the Communist Party of America, and others. Includes a long list of individuals indicted in connection with the Lusk Committee’s activities, a group which included Communist leaders Jim Larkin, Ben Gitlow, I.E. Ferguson, C.E. Ruthenberg, Jay Lovestone, Louis Shapiro, and Harry Winitsky.

**“Down Tools On May First! Workers Awaken! Workers Unite!”** [CLP leaflet, late April 1920] This typeset leaflet was produced by the underground Communist Labor Party for May Day 1920. There is no modesty in the 3,000 or so member CLP’s self-image:” The revolutionary advance guard of the Proletariat calls upon the workers everywhere to break the bondage of economic and political slavery and demonstrate on that day for the cause of real freedom.” The leaflet urges:” In years past we demonstrated for the 8-hour day on May First. Today we demonstrate for: ALL POWER TO THE WORKERS \* \* \* Workers! To get free you must answer the war cry of united capitalism against the workers of Russia as well as the workers in other countries with the war cry of united labor against capitalism. The answer to the capitalists of the world in their war against the social revolution in Russia and elsewhere must be the social revolution against capitalism everywhere.”

**“Make the Party a ‘Party of Action,’”** by C.E. Ruthenberg [published April 25, 1920]

\*\*revised edition—identifies “Kasbeck” as Alex Georgian\*\* In the popular imagination, the pivotal issue behind C.E. Ruthenberg and his co-thinkers bolting the old Communist Party of America in April of 1920 was related to division with the Russian Federation over the issue of merger with the Communist Labor Party. As this article by Ruthenberg from the pages of his group’s official organ indicates, this had virtually nothing to do with the matter. Instead, this article illustrates, the cause of the split was a long-running feud in the ranks of the party over the matter of construction of a mass party vs. a theoretically pure party, matters of personality (alliances and antipathies), as well as the tactical maneuvering of inner-party politics in the run-up to the 2nd Convention. Chief burrs under Ruthenberg’s saddle were the failure of the CEC majority to discipline Nicholas Hourwich for violating the instructions of the Executive Council and misrepresenting the situation to illicitly obtain money from the Boston District organization for an unauthorized trip to Europe, the capture of the majority on the Executive Council by removal of his ally Jay Lovestone for missing two meetings and inserting his opponent Hourwich in his place, and the move of the CEC majority to remove Chicago District Organizer Leonid Belsky ostensibly over matters of party discipline. In response, it was Ruthenberg who broke discipline, refusing to accept majority decisions of the Executive Council and Central Executive Committee, organizing a faction, and issuing an ultimatum to the CEC majority not to change District Organizers prior to the convention so that matters might be finally resolved in that venue, and preserving his own control over the party press. Instead, the CEC majority refused to bow to the ultimatum of Ruthenberg and his factional allies (who included CEC member Alex Georgian, the DOs of Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago as

well as the heads of the Polish, South Slavic, German, Ukrainian, and Estonian Federations). It was this that prompted the split, not hard-line posturing against unity with the CLP in defiance of Comintern instructions.

**"Letter to National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party of America in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary of the Communist Party of America in New York, April 7, 1920."** As the Communist Party of America was quietly sliding towards a factional split within two weeks, the sectarian bidding war between the CPA and the rival CLP over the apportionment of delegates to a Joint Unity Convention continued. In response to the CLP's "final" decision that it wanted 13 of 35 delegates (37%), the CPA responded with this ultimatum, declaring 35 an insufficient total number for the convention and offering the CLP 18 delegates of a total of 50 (36%). "Our committee is under instructions to hold this proposal open for five days for your acceptance and in the absence of such acceptance to withdraw from all further negotiations," Executive Secretary Ruthenberg declares. A proposed Joint Call for the convention written by the CPA was included with the correspondence.

**"Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York from Leonid Belsky in Chicago, April 30, 1920."** \*\*revised edition—identifies "Kasbeck" as Alex Georgian\*\* Chicago DO Belsky replies to factional leader Ruthenberg's April 28 letter that, contrary to Ruthenberg's assessment of the situation, "I believe that the membership is with us. We must go to the rank and file and explain to them the situation. They cannot understand us because they were kept ignorant about the facts in the party. We must be able to overthrow every committee supporting the majority group. Their advantage of legality [vis a vis the minority faction, which broke party discipline] will fail to help them as soon as we are able to expose this group to the membership." Former CEC member and Russian Federationist Alex Georgian is characterized as "too passive" so Russian Federationist Belsky urges that he be sent on the road to organize for the faction: "I would suggest that you let me go East at once in order to get Russians in New York, Pittsburgh, and Detroit with us. I can speak their language, they know me, and I never participated in their controversies before. If we get the Russians, we will get the party. Loss of Russian support means death to the majority group. There is nobody else who can accomplish it."

**"Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, April 28, 1920."** Letter from CP factional leader C.E. Ruthenberg to Chicago District Organizer Leonid Belsky, leading instigator of the April 1920 split. Ruthenberg warns his Chicago associates: "Both you and Comrade F. [Ferguson] are entirely too optimistic about the situation. You are judging by the facts as they exist in the Chicago District. Elsewhere different conditions prevail.... Both you and Comrade F. [Ferguson] are mistaken if you think that all that is necessary that we raise the banner of revolt against the CEC majority and the members will flock to our side. The contrary is true. The CEC majority has the advantage of legality. It is the authorized administrative body of the party in the minds of the members and we must justify our action in repudiating this majority in order to win support. The view of most of those I have

talked with upon hearing of the division is bewilderment. They cannot understand why there is a split and a statement of the facts of the how the split came about leaves them unconvinced as to there being an issue between the groups of sufficient importance to justify the split."

Ruthenberg further cautions that the mood among the CPA rank and file outside of Chicago is one of "suspicion and disgust with both groups." Even at this late date, there was motion for some sort of agreement between the majority and minority factions of the CPA; indeed, Ruthenberg tells Belsky that "I lean toward an agreement between ourselves and the Council majority for a joint call for the convention. If there is a joint call the entire membership will respond and there will be no difficulty in getting the CLP in such a convention. If with the CLP and our own following we are unable to whip the present majority group in open convention, then we haven't got much ground to stand on."

## MAY

**"An Open Letter to Eugene V. Debs: Issued by the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America."** [circa May 1919] The May 1920 Convention of the Socialist Party of America nominated Eugene V. Debs as its candidate for President for an unprecedented fifth time. Although imprisoned in the Federal Penitentiary at Atlanta, Debs accepted the nomination. The Communist Party of America was aghast at Debs' decision and issued this "open letter" to him as a leaflet. "We presume, Comrade Debs, that you are ignorant of the facts and unacquainted with all that transpired within the Socialist movement this last year," the open letter reads, detailing the opportunistic degeneration of the party in 1919-20, particularly the ultra-patriotic defense made in the context of the hearings over the suspension of the five New York State Assemblymen. "Between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party there can be no compromise. The latter is the most dangerous enemy of the working class and as such, we shall wage a bitter struggle against it. Their attempt to use your name in order to fool the masses will avail them of nothing. Their betrayal of Socialism has been too complete and too cowardly. Not even your name can hide their counterrevolutionary tendency. The class-conscious workers of America are through with the stinking carcass that calls itself the Socialist Party of America," the open letter rages.

**"Call to the Second Convention of the Communist Party of America."** [Probably issued early in May 1920] A call for a 2nd Convention of the Communist Party of America with details on the election of delegates to the gathering. Local groups were to each elect a delegate to a sub-district meeting, which was to in turn elect delegates to the District Convention, which was in turn to elect delegates to the National Convention, all based on paid membership. No dates are provided for any of these gatherings, the details left to verbal instructions of District Organizers for reasons of secrecy. The 2nd Convention of the CPA was ultimately held in New York City from July 13-18, 1920, and was attended by 24 delegates and 5 members of the CEC.

**"Hail to the Soviets! May Day Proclamation by the Central Executive Committee Communist Party of America."** [late April 1920] \*\*GRAPHIC VERSION (large file—790 k.)\*\* This a pdf generated from a direct scan of an agitational leaflet distributed by the underground Communist Party of America for May Day 1920—the first such holiday in the history of the organization. Eighteen months had passed since the end of the World War, the leaflet

observed, but the purported war of “democracy against autocracy,” which resulted in “the slaughter of millions of workingmen upon the battlefields of Europe” had produced nothing worthy of note for the working class. Indeed, the stage was being set for new conflict: “On two continents, on many battlefields, men are fighting. The threat of war and yet more wars hangs over the people of almost every country of Europe and America. Imperialistic ambition and greed—the desire to secure new economic resources for exploitation, which is the characteristic of every capitalist nation—are creating new jealousies and conflicts and continually threaten to again participate the people of these countries into the abyss of universal slaughter.” There was only one solution that would save the workers from economic collapse and war: “Capitalism has played its part in the history of mankind. It is no longer workable. It must be uprooted and destroyed, and a new system of industry built in its place.... The general political strike is the means of expressing your power and the beginning of the revolutionary struggle which will finally establish the Soviet Government and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.”

**["No Unity with Anti-Revolutionary Party: Declaration of the NEC of the CLP, Adopted May 1, 1920."](#)** With this published statement the governing National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party rejects in no uncertain terms any prospect of electoral cooperation with the Socialist Party of America in its 1920 Presidential campaign on behalf of imprisoned radical publicist Eugene V. Debs. The differences between the two organizations are proclaimed as “fundamental” by the CLP and the SPA’s strategy of “capture of the capitalist state” is dismissed as “essentially counter-revolutionary.” The CLP instead insists upon “the destruction of the capitalist state, the setting up of a proletarian dictatorship as an instrument of the proletarian revolution.” The CLP asserts that “Debs can not create revolutionary prestige for the Socialist Party by accepting that party’s nomination for President, but he loses his revolutionary prestige by allying himself with an essentially anti-revolutionary party” and instructs those remaining personally loyal to him to resign from the CLP “in justice to our party and to themselves.” Invocation of disciplinary measures is threatened should CLP members electorally support Socialist candidates.

**["Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 1, 1920."](#)**  
\*\*revised edition—identifies “Kasbeck” as Alex Georgian\*\* This is CP breakaway “minority” factional leader Ruthenberg’s reply to Chicago leader Leonid Belsky’s letter of April 30. Ruthenberg criticizes Belsky’s optimistic decision to send out a call for a unity convention with the CLP, noting that on April 29 the CLP had rejected taking a minority position in a 32-18 delegate apportionment. Instead, the CLP favored holding dual conventions that could be merged into a joint convention if those delegates found sufficient grounds for such a merger, Ruthenberg said, adding that Belsky should consult with other leading members of the faction, including Isaac Ferguson, Joseph Kowalski, and the South Slavic Federationist “Stankovich” to come up with a consensus on the matter. Ruthenberg indicates that no reply had been had from the CPA “Majority” concerning a proposed joint convention of the two factions of the CPA, adding “I understand that their proposal is several months delay and the exclusion of the CLP, to which, of course, I will not agree.”

**“Russian Memories,”** by Louise Bryant [May 1920] A well crafted poem, sad and beautiful, written by radical journalist Louise Bryant in America pining for friend and lover John Reed, seemingly unreachable in Soviet Russia on the other side the Allied blockade. Fans of the sentimental Warren Beatty movie Reds will be reaching for the tissues when the irony of the last stanza becomes clear.

**“Letter to I.E. Ferguson in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 1, 1920.”**

CPA “Minority” leader Ruthenberg writes his closest associate with information on ongoing factional turmoil. Ruthenberg is sanguine about his faction’s position: “I am afraid you are judging the situation in the party from the Chicago viewpoint. This viewpoint is indicated in Fishers’ [Belsky’s] letter to me urging ‘Please send the call for the joint convention as early as possible.’ What Joint Convention? With the CLP? I suppose that is what he means and he seems to think that all that is necessary is to dictate or write the circular. It happens, however, that the CLP rejected the apportionment of 32 and 18 before our split and now will talk nothing but equal apportionment of delegates and the join convention has disappeared from view. Similarly the situation in our own party. It is not all one way. I have been in Boston, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia and I tell you it’s a hard fight and the outcome is still in doubt.” The rank and file was “simply bewildered” by the sudden split — the CPA “Minority” drew primary support from its call for a convention to settle matters, the CPA “Majority” from their legal origin in the regularly constituted CEC, Ruthenberg notes, adding “it is hard to make a case out of the issues on account of which this break took place.” Ruthenberg strongly warns Ferguson that “One thing is necessary before we can hope to make much progress in this thing, and that is that you comrades there in Chicago undeceive yourself about it being a walkaway.”

**“Circular Letter to All Members of the Latvian Federation of the CPA from Central Committee Member ‘Zehkali,’ circa May 1, 1920.”** Circular letter sent to CPA Latvian Federation at the time of the split of the “CEC Minority” faction headed by C.E. Ruthenberg. Latvian CC member “Zehkali” attacks Ruthenberg and the CLP (which would soon unite) as “ex-centrists” and “me-too communists” for whom electoral politics a la the Socialist Party was the ultimate objective. He charges that “they say: ‘down with theoretical clearness, more practical work and unity with social-patriots’ — splitting our organization, taking its treasury, and fooling its members with phrases about unity and one big movement.” “Zehkali” exhorts his Federation to “Tear off the mask of those who come to you in the name of unity but who themselves split your organization, using the present moment to realize their traitorous aims. They take the party’s treasury and paralyze your activities. Down with traitors! Prove once more that you have power which no counterrevolutionaries can break.”

**“National Executive Committee Meets.”** [May 1, 1920] This news article from the official organ of the underground Communist Labor Party is interesting not for what it reveals, but for the fact that it reveals basically nothing—and example of the oblique vacuousness that dominated the press of the underground communist movement. Purporting to relay to the membership the actions of “another three days’ session” of the party’s governing NEC, the report fails to give any information whatsoever that might allow rank-and-file party members to assess the actions of its governing body. The date and location of the gathering are not

provided, nor the names or even the pseudonyms of any of the participants. Issues discussed by the body are described only in the vaguest way, and specific issues of the debate are discussed not at all. It was upon blank reports such as these that rank and file party members were ostensibly expected to exercise supervision and control of the party apparatus. Given reports of bland nothingness such as this one, there should be little wonder that the entire history of the underground communist movement was marked by the atrophy of organizational size and vitality.

**["Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 3, 1920 - morning."](#)** \*\*revised edition—identifies “Kasbeck” as Alex Georgian\*\* Short note from former Executive Secretary of the CPA Ruthenberg to head of the rebellious Chicago organization Leonid Belsky. Ruthenberg, replying to Belsky’s April 30 missive, announces that he has dispatched Russian Federationist Alex Georgian on an organizing tour to garner support for their dissident faction and suggests that Polish Federation leader Joseph Kowalski and South Slavic Federation leader “Stankovich” head to Detroit to consolidate the branches of their respective language groups for the dissident “Minority” faction. “The Ukrainian Federation is lost to us,” Ruthenberg announces. “They do not support the “majority” but neither are they with us. I think they intend to propose some sort of agreement—the suspension of [Nicholas] Hourwich and Ries [John Ballam] from the committee and cooperation of the Executive Secretary [Ruthenberg] and the “majority” on some such basis, as was considered during the negotiations...” The “Majority” faction would not join with the “Minority” in a convention unless the latter retracted its standing convention call, however—something that Ruthenberg and his associates were unwilling to do, leery of being outmaneuvered.

**["Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 3, 1920 - afternoon"](#)** A second May 3, 1920 letter from CPA dissident factional leader C.E. Ruthenberg to the leading figure of the dissidents in Chicago. It clearly emerges from this document that the official organ of Ruthenberg’s faction was printed in Chicago, not in New York—the 1920 CPA split broke to a great extent along New York-Chicago lines. A decision has been made by Ruthenberg on the question of with whom his faction should unite, but he leaves open the possibility of his unilateral decision being overruled. “Unless I hear from your committee in disagreement I will make tentative arrangements with the CLP for a unity conference, which means that their delegates will come to our convention and before the two groups are united we will discuss Manifesto, Program, and Constitution and each side would work out these documents in advance, so that there will be no great delay at the convention,” Ruthenberg writes. Ruthenberg indicates that in addition to Chicago, his faction had support in the Cleveland and Pittsburgh districts. He says in this and other letters of the period nothing of New York or Boston, the other main areas of Communist presence.

**["Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York from Charles Dirba in New York, May 4, 1920."](#)** CPA Majority faction Executive Secretary Charles Dirba writes to Minority faction leader C.E. Ruthenberg in reply to Ruthenberg’s April 22, 1920, letter. The CPA Majority takes the position that (1) Before the Majority will enter into discussions regarding a unity convention with the Minority, the Minority must rescind its standing convention call; and (2) The 2nd Convention of

the CPA can only be legally called by the CEC elected at the 1st Convention (i.e. by the CPA Majority, not by Ruthenberg and his group). Upon acceptance of these conditions, the CPA Majority was ready to proceed with a joint unity convention with the Minority and a reply was requested.

**["Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York from I.E. Ferguson in Chicago, May 4, 1920."](#)**

Communication to CPA dissident Minority leader Ruthenberg from his closest ally in Chicago. After noting that a recent article by Ruthenberg was off to the press for publication in the faction's official organ, Ferguson vocalizes against the CPA Majority, remarking that "I have come to realize that these schemers who suddenly discovered after November 1917 that they were Russians and Bolsheviks have done our work a tremendous lot of harm. There isn't a real Russian among them, much less a real Bolshevik. They are typical East Side politicians who happen to swing revolutionary lingo, and to them need only be added those who fell for the nationalistic jingo stuff, like [Charles] Dirba, and the ridiculous sentimentalists, like [Max] Cohen and [Rose Pastor] Stokes, who can be only the limit of something, be it Wilsonism or Bolshevism." Ferguson believes "reluctantly but with absolute conviction, there must be unity between us and the CLP, no matter how petty they are about it. We face the same proposition which we had last Summer when we made the unity agreement with the Federationists. Let the CLP brag, as did last Summer's "Minority Group" - it is up to us to achieve this one decisive thing of eliminating a counter-Communist Party and the division in the Communist ranks between aliens and natives." Scholars should note particularly that the Ruthenberg-Ferguson faction was not an exclusively or even predominantly Anglophonic group, but included major elements of the Russian, South Slavic, and Polish Federations. As for the "Hourwichites," Ferguson dismisses them as an "anarchist sect" in the making. Ferguson invites Ruthenberg to come stay in Chicago.

**["Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 4, 1920."](#)**

Cover letter from acting Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg of the CPA Minority to the head of the dissident Chicago organization, Leonid Belsky, noting that the attached draft convention call for a joint unity convention with the CLP represents "the only basis on which we can achieve unity with the CLP and it seems to me that under the existing circumstances we must work toward that end." Ruthenberg adds that "Up to this time the CP has the position of advantage as against the CLP, because it was the larger organization and stood for a more clear expression of Communist principles. If we united with the CLP and form the United Communist Party we will have assumed the dominating position and the Hourwich group will be isolated." Ruthenberg asks the Chicago District Committee to ratify the conditions of this call and to wire their acceptance to Ruthenberg, at which time he will sign the call with the head of the CLP [Alfred Wagenknecht] and have it published in the press.

**[Communist Labor Party is Legal, Says Secretary Wilson: Rules Cannot Deport Aliens Who Hold Membership.](#)** (*The Toiler*) [event of May 5, 1920] Although the American Communist movement throughout its first four decades was dealt a massive series of legal defeats which opened the door to state repression, one surprising exception came in May 1920, when Secretary of Labor William Bauchop Wilson ruled that unlike the Communist Party

of America, mere membership in the Communist Labor Party of America was not illegal per se and an automatically deportable offense. As immigration and deportation ran through the Labor Department, this put a severe kink in the efforts of the Department of Justice and the right wing political establishment to conduct mass deportations of radical aliens. In contrast to the free-ranging acceptance of tangential evidence then in vogue, Sec. Wilson offered a principled rationale. "The tactics of the Communist Party in Russia can have no bearing upon the Communist Labor Party in the United States except in so far as those tactics are accepted or adopted by the Communist Labor Party; nor can the statements made by prominent members of the party be accepted as the expressions of the organization unless the party by its own action adopts the statements," he declared.

**Secretary Wilson's Ruling: An Editorial from *The Toiler*, by Elmer T. Allison [event of May 5, 1920]** Editorial from the legal weekly of the Communist Labor Party extolling the decision of Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson that mere membership in the CLP was not sufficient grounds for deportation of non-citizen members. Editor Allison professes confusion over what distinction the Secretary found between the illegal per se Communist Party and the CLP, declaring that differences between the groups lay in the realm of tactical and organizational matters, not those of fundamental policy. "It is said that the Almighty moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. So it is with politicians," Allison whimsically comments. Allison already argues the case for electoral participation for propaganda purposes if the Secretary of Labor's interpretation of CLP legality stands. He welcomes legality as an opportunity for the CLP to "push will all the force at their command the upbuilding of the organization." He optimistically declares: "It is safe to assert that that which could not be destroyed by repressions and intimidations of Palmer and his agents and inquisitors must flourish with even a modicum of liberty of action."

**"Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in New York from Leonid Belsky in Chicago, May 5, 1920."** Head of the Chicago District organization Leonid Belsky informs Minority faction leader C.E. Ruthenberg that he had arranged with Karl Wolfskeel to move back the time for which his resort was reserved for the unity convention with the CLP to June 15. This would allow 5 weeks for delegate elections and thus both the CPA Majority and the CLP could "be tested in regard to the honesty of their desire of a 'joint' convention." In other words, even at this late date a 3-way unity convention between the CPA Minority, the CPA Majority, and the CLP was sought. The Chicago District Committee had voted to hold the convention "not later than May 25 [1920]" however—"regardless of participation of other groups." Unity with the CLP was to be made on the basis of the draft joint call.

**"Letter to Charles Dirba in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 5, 1920."** Head of the CPA Minority Ruthenberg informs Executive Secretary of the CPA Majority Dirba that "We are prepared to discuss with you and come to an agreement in regard to all the details of a joint convention call, including the date of the convention, but until and unless such an agreement is reached the call which we have issued will stand." He notes: "We are not quite so gullible as you may think and while we reiterate our willingness to enter into the joint call, our present call will stand and in the absence of any agreement before the District Conventions are

held, the National Convention will be held as we have arranged." An impasse on negotiations between the two CPA factions was thus reached.

**"Bulletin To All District Organizers and Federation Executives from C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary, May 5, 1920."** Short summary of the factional situation from Executive Secretary of the CPA Minority faction, C.E. Ruthenberg. Ruthenberg notes that the CPA Majority had called for the Minority to rescind its convention call. Along these lines, Ruthenberg notes that "the Majority group of the CEC had indicated that it wants a long delay before a convention and this we cannot agree to. I have said to them that we are ready to negotiate on all questions and come to an agreement, including the date of the convention, but we will not withdraw our call prior to reaching such an agreement. If the Majority group maintains its position this question is deadlocked and we need not look to anything further from this direction." In addition, the CLP had rejected the proposed 32 (CPA) to 18 (CLP) apportionment of delegates. He notes "Since no agreement could be reached on this question a unity conference has been proposed as the alternative. This will mean that the CLP convention delegates and our convention delegates will meet together as separate units and proceed to discuss the question of unity and arrive at an agreement before the two bodies of delegates are united in one convention. A unity conference of this character will take the question of unity out of the hands of executive officials and leave it to the representatives of the members—the delegates to the convention—to decide." Ruthenberg sees the prospects for a successful unity convention with the CLP working from these terms as favorable.

**"Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 6, 1920."** CPA minority group leader C.E. Ruthenberg announces to the head of the faction's Chicago organization that an agreement has been reached in New York with the leadership of the Communist Labor Party for a joint unity convention. A meeting is slated for Chicago for May 20, 1920, to bring together representatives of both parties to draft a manifesto, program, and constitution for the joint organization. Delegates for the CLP are to be Max Bedacht, L.E. Katterfeld, and Abram Jakira. Ruthenberg suggests that Belsky and I.E. Ferguson join him as their faction's representatives. Ruthenberg states that he will be leaving NYC on Saturday, May 8, and would proceed to Cleveland, where he planned on staying until the 17th or 18th. Ruthenberg states that Belsky should appoint a Detroit District Organizer and see to it that delegate elections take place so that they are able to get some representation at the District Convention from Polish, South Slavic, German, and Russian units. Again, scholars should note that the Ruthenberg group was not exclusively Anglophonic, but rather was a coalition of language federations—the above-mentioned being the principle groups.

**"Call for a Unity Convention Between the Communist Labor Party and the Communist Party."** [circa May 7, 1920.] Convention call for the joint unity convention between the CLP and the Ruthenberg faction of the CPA. The groups were to unite upon 4 basic principles: "(1) Class war of the workers without compromise with the bourgeoisie and social patriotic parties; (2) Mass action of the working class as the means to conquer power; (3) Dictatorship of the proletariat; (4) Soviet constitution as the proper basis of proletarian democracy." Each party was to call a national convention and to resolve themselves into a Unity Conference, remaining

separate until preliminary discussions for unity were completed. Delegates were to be elected secretly by the membership of each organization. The heads of the CLP and Ruthenberg group of the CPA were to jointly handle the task of convention arrangements.

**“Bulletin #2 Agreement for a Unity Conference Between the Communist Party and Communist Labor Party, May 7, 1920.”** Bulletin by C.E. Ruthenberg to the membership of the Minority faction of the Communist Party of America. Ruthenberg relays the text of the joint call for a unity convention between the Communist Labor Party and the CPA Minority group. Ruthenberg notes: “The preliminary conference between the two groups of delegates will furnish the best opportunity for the discussion of principles in the Communist Party convention in Chicago. Everything was cut and dried - settled by caucus action - and the work of the convention was purely mechanical.... It is not through such a convention that real agreement and understanding of fundamentals is secured. There must be discussion and debate on all points in our program, so that if there is disagreement the issues are made and a decision made understandingly, not merely by swallowing what a caucus has decided in advance.” “While the result of this unity conference may still leave a faction of the Communist Party outside of the United Communist Party, this faction will not live long as a separate organization, but will soon be absorbed in the united party,” Ruthenberg optimistically asserts.

**“Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 7, 1920.”** Ruthenberg remarks to his Chicago associate Belsky that the CLP had previously rejected the 32-18 delegate split proposed by the CPA before the departure of the Ruthenberg Minority Group. They were certainly not going to accept that ratio after the CPA had divided, Ruthenberg states, adding that the CLP’s argument was basically sound. “We don’t know. You may say that we will have 90 percent of the membership in our convention, but I say—you will pardon my being frank—that such a statement is rot. We’ll be lucky if we have 50 percent represented,” Ruthenberg says. He adds that “We will have Chicago, most of Cleveland, some of Detroit and Pittsburgh, about half of Philadelphia, and less than half of New York and Boston. At the present moment we may have 60% of the membership supporting our convention—not necessarily our group. What the situation will be in another two weeks is hard to say. Here in New York we have lost ground in the last week.” The Chicago District Committee, headed by Belsky, had come out for unity only under the 32-18 basis, a position which Ruthenberg believes to be utterly unrealistic, and he issues an ultimatum: “If the Chicago District Committee refuses to agree to this proposition now, there is only one course for me to pursue and that is to send my resignation as Executive Secretary of the CEC and go home and wait until there is someone with authority to receive the party funds and property from me, and this I will do.” Ruthenberg declares that “The important thing for us is that we have a convention and elect an Executive Committee that will have authority, as one of our weaknesses at the present moment is that I stand alone as one man defying the ‘legal’ committee of the party,” and he urges Belsky to bring the Chicago District Committee around to a more realistic position on the unity question.

**“Call for a Unity Conference between the Communist Labor Party and the Communist Party.”** [circa May 7, 1920] While another version of this convention call has been up on this

website for six years, this new file includes a bit of marginalia from the CLP press indicating that it went into unity negotiations with the Ruthenberg minority of the CPA with open eyes, met “several times” preliminary to the release of the convention call, and together with the Ruthenberg group agreed “not to negotiate with the ‘majority’ group of the CEC of the CPA,” from which Ruthenberg had split. It is perhaps worthy of note that the joint meeting between the CLP and the CPA splinter was now framed as a unity “conference” rather than a “convention.”

**“What Kind of Party?”** by C.E. Ruthenberg [May 8, 1920]. Published in the official organ of the Ruthenberg faction of the CPA during its brief period of independent existence; unsigned though unquestionably written by editor Ruthenberg. This is a lengthy and detailed critique the majority group of the old Communist Party of America, from which Ruthenberg & Co. recently departed. The document is interesting on a number of levels. As a criticism of the CPA majority group, Ruthenberg sounds like a born again member of the CLP, dismissing the old party structure as nothing more than a “Federation of Federations” directed by a clique in the CEC “more interested in the personal ‘revolutionary fortunes’ of its members than in building up the party.” This group were pseudo-ultrarevolutionary dogmatists, he believed, unable to see anything save through Russian revolutionary metaphors, incapable and philosophically unwilling to engage in the daily struggles of the working class, fearful of expanding the party’s size and influence lest more qualified people come into the organization and take their jobs. On another level, this is interesting as legal party advocate Ruthenberg’s single most explicit statement on the necessity of armed struggle. Ruthenberg writes: “The party must be ready to put into its program the definite statement that mass action culminates in open insurrection and armed conflict with the capitalist state. The party program and the party literature dealing with our program and policies should clearly express our position on this point.” Ruthenberg differed by asserting that there were a range of forms of “mass action,” ever more intense stages of struggle, whereas the majority group saw only a single form of mass action, armed struggle. “We must propagate to the workers the USE OF FORCE as the ONLY MEANS of conquering the power of the state and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat,” Ruthenberg quotes the CPA Majority as asserting. Finally, this is interesting for certain esoteric hints: (1) that the Ruthenberg group was “99% foreign;” (2) a seeming willingness to reunite with the CPA Majority in convention just as readily as the Ruthenberg group chose to unite with the CLP just a couple weeks after this document was written; (3) a belief that “future development of the party organization must be in the direction of shop units” and an understanding that this form of organization was incompatible with the Federation-based dues stamp system; (4) possible first American Communist use of the word “dialectical.”

**“Letter to Alex Georgian in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg in Cleveland, May 14, 1920.”** \*\*revised edition—identifies “Kasbeck” as Alex Georgian\*\* Reply of CPA Minority faction leader C.E. Ruthenberg to Russian Federationist and touring organizer Alex Georgian. Ruthenberg declines to return to New York after having just left the city a few days earlier, citing business to be settled in Chicago. He offers the following optimistic assessment of the Minority faction’s support in various districts: “Chicago is solidly with us in spite of all the efforts of the opposition; Cleveland is 75 to 90% ours, and in Philadelphia we have at least 60%.” Ruthenberg notes that plans no longer feature a delay in an attempt to forge unity between the CPA Majority and Minority factions. “You must realize that this convention no longer depends upon our arrangements alone, but it is also a unity conference with the CLP. Their delegates

and ours will meet together and agree upon principles and program and constitution, and if there is such agreement the two bodies will unite," Ruthenberg writes. Ruthenberg makes explicit the reasons for his haste: "There is still another reason why we must have this convention quickly. We are at present without any governing committee for our faction. I am acting alone, merely conferring with different persons on important matters. This is a source of weakness. We must have a responsible committee to represent us. It is neither fair to me, nor a proper arrangement to force me to make all the decisions for our group individually. In spite of the view of the "majority," I don't want to be the party. The convention will organize our group, with possibly the CLP included." There will be plenty of time to achieve unity with the Hourwich-led CPA Majority after the unity convention with the CLP, in Ruthenberg's view: "We can lay down the terms on which they can join the united party at the convention. If we take such action we will be the stronger group—we will stand in relation to them as the CP did toward the CLP during the last seven months." He adds that "I have given up any hope of arriving at an agreement with the Andrews [Hourwich] and Bernstein [Max Cohen]. We must fight it out to a finish. The convention is our strong hope and we must have it quickly."

#### **["Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in Cleveland from 'J. Kasbeck' in New York, May 10, 1920."](#)**

"J. Kasbeck" was the pseudonym of a Russian federationist from New York that left the Central Executive Committee of the old Communist Party of America with C.E. Ruthenberg in April 1920. "Kasbeck" effectively played the role of touring organizer for the Ruthenberg-led CPA "Minority" faction during the run-up to the Joint Unity Convention with the Communist Labor Party which established the United Communist Party of America. This document is a report by "Kasbeck" to Ruthenberg of his experiences on the road. "Kasbeck" states that in every city he visited in the Boston district, "we have a majority with the exception of the Letts [Latvians]." The Majority's case against Ruthenberg & Co. seems to have related largely to his absconding with party funds and the apparent rush of the Minority to hold a snap Convention. "Kasbeck" relays the support of the Jewish and Ukrainian Federations for a joint convention between the CPA Majority and Minority factions on terms favorable to that latter. "It seems, however, that the CEC is using its propaganda in order to win time and undermine our strength by their organized front," "Kasbeck" notes. "Kasbeck" calls for Ruthenberg to return to New York from Cleveland (where he was staying briefly, en route to Chicago): "We can do lots of work here and break opposition if we act as persistently as our opponents do. If we neglect New York and if we do not postpone the convention we will gather but a small representation from the East," "Kasbeck" states.

#### **["Letter to 'J. Kasbeck' in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg in Cleveland, May 14, 1920."](#)**

Reply of CPA Minority faction leader C.E. Ruthenberg to Russian Federationist and touring organizer "J. Kasbeck." Ruthenberg declines to return to New York after having just left the city a few days earlier, citing business to be settled in Chicago. He offers the following optimistic assessment of the Minority faction's support in various districts: "Chicago is solidly with us in spite of all the efforts of the opposition; Cleveland is 75 to 90% ours, and in Philadelphia we have at least 60%." Ruthenberg notes that plans no longer feature a delay in an attempt to forge unity between the CPA Majority and Minority factions. "You must realize that this convention no longer depends upon our arrangements alone, but it is also a unity conference with the CLP. Their delegates and ours will meet together and agree upon principles and program and constitution, and if there is such agreement the two bodies will unite," Ruthenberg

writes. Ruthenberg makes explicit the reasons for his haste: "There is still another reason why we must have this convention quickly. We are at present without any governing committee for our faction. I am acting alone, merely conferring with different persons on important matters. This is a source of weakness. We must have a responsible committee to represent us. It is neither fair to me, nor a proper arrangement to force me to make all the decisions for our group individually. In spite of the view of the "majority," I don't want to be the party. The convention will organize our group, with possibly the CLP included." There will be plenty of time to achieve unity with the Hourwich-led CPA Majority after the unity convention with the CLP, in Ruthenberg's view: "We can lay down the terms on which they can join the united party at the convention. If we take such action we will be the stronger group—we will stand in relation to them as the CP did toward the CLP during the last seven months." He adds that "I have given up any hope of arriving at an agreement with the Andrews [Hourwich] and Bernstein [Max Cohen]. We must fight it out to a finish. The convention is our strong hope and we must have it quickly."

**"Statement to All Members of the Communist Party of America from the Chicago DEC." [May 14, 1920]** This extensive statement was made by the dissident Chicago District Executive Committee to the membership of the Communist Party. A bitter barrage is levied against the governing Central Executive Committee of the national organization, which is characterized as having incompetently presided over "8 months of quietness and inactivity": "Since the time when the Communist Party was organized, not a single paragraph of our program was developed. Not one paragraph of the program was ever used as a basis for action, [nor was it] even discussed by the Central Executive Committee. Not one of the most important tactical questions of the Communist movement in America was solved or discussed. The Communist Party was put in a state of coma because the central organ never showed any initiative or capability to develop party questions and build up an organization. The rank and file did not have the opportunity to learn the party questions and express their opinions." The CEC majority had dodged every issue of import, the Chicago DEC argues: "This majority has the nerve to state that Communist principles are safe when they are in their hands, but it is evident that their understanding of these principles is an empty play with phrases. Nothing has been done. Even the question that primarily occupied the thoughts of our members, the question of the relation of our party to the IWW, was completely ignored by the Central Executive Committee." The CPA is characterized in most unflattering terms: "The Communist Party, stating the matter accurately, is only such in name. We were never a party, but rather a free federation of federations... These work independently from the party and from each other. Their printed matter has been mainly nationalistic, bearing a distant relation to the Communist Party." A newly centralized organization is held as the only possible solution."

**"Statement on the Present Situation to the Boston District Organization of the CPA,"** by C.E. Ruthenberg [May 14, 1920] This communication from C.E. Ruthenberg to his supporters in the Boston District emphasizes the group's commitment to a May 25 gathering at Bridgman, Michigan. "This convention has the practically unanimous support of the Chicago District (including Detroit and Pittsburgh), a majority of the members of the Philadelphia District, and about half the members of the New York District. As to the Boston District you know the situation better than I. There is no question, however, that from 60 to 75% of the entire membership of the party will be represented in this convention," Ruthenberg asserts. He

notes that “the ‘majority’ group, with the support of possibly from 25 to 40% of the membership, will not participate in our convention. It is proposed that the convention shall lay down the terms on which the CEC of the united party—if unity is achieved—will authorize to deal with this ‘group.’” Ruthenberg declares: “If the Lettish [Latvian], Lithuanian, and that small part of the Russian Federation which is not supporting the ‘minority’ want to have a party consisting of a Federation of two or three Federations, in opposition to the Communist Party, let them try it. While such a division will be regrettable, it will not take long for such a Federation of these Federations to learn that so far as functioning as a Communist organization that will mean anything in the life of the workers of this country is concerned, they are doomed to sterility and impotence. They are doubly doomed under the leadership of the Andrews [Nicholas Hourwiches] and Bernsteins [Maximilian Cohens].”

**"The Winds of Reaction: News of the Socialist Party Convention."** [events of May 8-14, 1920] With its own organization shattered by police repression — thousands of members driven off, meetings forced underground, dues payments and publication subscriptions disrupted, leaders and non-citizen members arrested, multiple thousands of dollars in bail and legal fees added to organizational expenses — the Communist Labor Party makes itself feel better for a moment here by laughing at the misfortune of others. This account by an unnamed editorialist assesses the recently completed convention of the rival Socialist Party of America. A mass meeting held May 9 at Madison Square Garden drew less than 5,000 people to the 12,000 seat building, it is noted, despite featuring SPA leader Morris Hillquit's first public appearance in two years. The party moved still further to the right at the gathering in opposing a “centrist” minority faction at the convention headed by Louis Engdahl and Bill Kruse. The notion of a dictatorship of the proletariat was denounced and affiliation with the 3rd International rejected by the convention majority, it is noted, and a faith in “bourgeois democracy” affirmed. “The workers’ state must destroy the capitalist state to grant the workers rights,” the writer states instead. The nomination of the imprisoned Gene Debs by the Socialists for President is seen as an empty gesture, with the “typical right wing Socialist and reactionary” Seymour Stedman, nominee for Vice President, the actual party leader that would be on the campaign trail as the face of the party. The left wing Engdahl-Kruse faction is repeatedly mocked as an exercise in ineffectual centrism and the conservatism of the new governing National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party emphasized.

**"Party Discipline: Unsigned editorial in Communist Labor."** [May 15, 1920] A heavily idealized discussion of the notion of party discipline in the Communist movement. The editorialist declares party discipline to be “indispensable,” in that it enables “the application of concentrated action.” However, the editorialist asserts, such discipline between the decision-making executive bodies and the rank and file receiving “the orders of the executive bodies” must necessarily be a voluntary obedience based upon the confidence of the membership in the leadership. “A leadership that can interpret the needs of the revolutionary class struggle will never find itself out of harmony with the membership, and therefore, will seldom or never have need to command obedience. A leadership, however, misunderstanding and misinterpreting those needs will always find itself out of harmony with the rank and file and will not be able to command obedience to its orders, even not in the name of the sacredness of

communist discipline,” it is maintained. Thus, indiscipline is necessarily a reflection of a lack of confidence of the membership in the leadership. No other potential causal factors are introduced into the simplistic discussion here.

**“The Chicago “Picnic”: Bureau of Investigation Report on the Mass Meeting Held at National Grove, Riverside, IL (near Chicago),” by August H. Loula [May 16, 1920]** One missing component from the narrative on the history of the 1920 split of the CPA has been a view of the reaction of the rank and file to the machinations of the two competing leaderships. This excerpt of a report by Bureau of Investigation Special Agent August Loula brings the membership to the fore for the first time. On May 16, 1920, the dissident Chicago organization of the underground CPA held a “picnic” at a park in the Chicago area—actually a general membership meeting attended by some 500 Chicago members of the CPA held to discuss the volatile party situation. The gathering heard presentations by representatives of the CEC Majority and the dissident Ruthenberg-Ferguson-Belsky group, the latter denouncing the “shameful conduct of the Executive Committee since the January raids.” Despite a claim made by the Majority representative that “under the circumstances the members of [the CEC] could not act otherwise because the life of the party was at stake and in order to save it they were obliged to place themselves in hiding,” the gathering issued a resolution supportive of the dissident majority group.”

**“Partial Minutes of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America.”** [May 21-23, 1920] Full minutes, sans a missing page or two, of the May 1920 plenary session of the governing Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America. Six meetings of the Executive Council had been held between this May session of the CEC and the April session at which C.E. Ruthenberg and his followers had split the organization. The actions of that subcommittee were ratified by the full CEC here. A report on the state of the organization was delivered by new Executive Secretary Charles Dirba, who noted that the Ukrainian Federation did not leave the organization with the Ruthenberg minority, but rather had elected to stay with the regular majority faction of the CPA. A financial crisis caused by Ruthenberg's seizure of the CPA's bank account at the time of the split was averted when the four loyal Language Federations (Russian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Ukrainian) came up with sufficient funds for the organization to continued operations; a little over a month after Ruthenberg's departure, the organization held a cash balance on hand of \$1250, Dirba indicated. As a security measure to prevent any future theft of funds by a splitting Executive Secretary, a trustee was elected to jointly control the account for all party funds over \$1000. The factional situation in each of the CPA's districts is reported by DOs, although a page or pages detailing the situation in the various CPA Language Federations is unfortunately missing from the surviving archival copy of the minutes. Proposed constitutional changes were discussed and an agenda for the forthcoming 2nd National Convention of the CPA voted upon. A letter of Louis Fraina of the provisional Pan-American Bureau of the Comintern instructing the CPA to contest the 1920 Presidential election was deemed “contradictory to Communist principles” as passed by the Founding Convention of the CPA and was referred to the 2nd Convention for possible action. An investigating committee to deal with Jacob Nosovitsky was named and charges preferred against John Ballam alleging unscrupulous financial dealings with party members were agreed to be heard. The Executive Council was instructed to publish a resolution against C.E. Ruthenberg damning him “for all his treacherous acts against the Party — for his seizure of Party funds and records, for continuing to sign as Executive Secretary without any authorization, for issuing his paper under Party name and seal, etc.”

**“Greetings to the Communist International.”** A Message from the First Convention of the United Communist Party of America, May 31, 1920. Convention greetings to the Executive Committee of the Comintern from the newly established UCP announcing the formation of that organization. “Unfortunately, however, this unity is not complete as to the Communist Party, in which a new separation has lately arisen. But this is a division so entirely artificial in its nature that we are confident it cannot long be sustained,” the message notes, adding that some of the members of the Russian, Ukrainian, Latvian, Polish, and Lithuanians have stayed aloof from the new organization, the “separatist leaders” of which seemed to be motivated by “control not based on any distinction of Communist principles but upon the personal desires of a few Federation leaders for position and influence.”

**“Resolution on the Debs Nomination: Adopted by the First Convention of the United Communist Party, Bridgman, MI — May 31, 1920.”** Resolution of the newly established United Communist Party reaffirming the position taken by the two former organizations from which it was formed — that “neither respect and love for Debs, nor admiration for his long service in the militant labor movement of this country, can efface the fact that this nomination makes him the standard-bearer of the Right Wing remnant of the party which existed at the time he went into the Atlanta penitentiary.” The resolution states that “The name of Debs cannot in least alter the fact that the Socialist Party of the United States is an organization inherently anti-revolutionary, in that it fosters the illusion that capitalism can be destroyed through the legislative and constitutional methods of capitalist “democracy.” The Socialist Party has the ambition to make itself part of this capitalist government, thereby to reform it. The Communists stand for the destruction of this form of government and constitutionalism, since these are in their very nature the mainstay of capitalist exploitation.”

**“Resolution on the 1920 Campaign: Adopted by the First Convention of the United Communist Party, Bridgman, MI — May 31, 1920.”** Statement of the Founding Convention of the UCP that it the organization “will not attempt to nominate candidates in the 1920 elections.” The resolution explained that the defeat of the steel and coal strikes by state intervention had ushered in a period of state repression against the radical movement. “These events have compelled the rebuilding of the party along entirely new lines.... Hundreds of cases are pending in the courts. The outcome of the cases up to this time labels the party as an outlaw organization; to expose one's affiliation with the party is alone sufficient to cause deportation or long imprisonment. Nominations are impossible under these circumstances.” The Communists' left sectarian position of boycotting the 1920 elections rather than lending critical support to the Socialists was not forgotten by the SP when the concept of the United Front was unveiled in 1922.

**“Program of the United Communist Party of America”** [May 31, 1920] The founding convention of the United Communist Party adopted this extremely lengthy “program,” restating the international situation and the role of the Communists in it. The world was in chaos and nearing collapse, in the view of the UCP: “In a large part of Europe capitalist society is no

longer able to function so as to produce even the bare necessities of life. Millions are starving; semi-starvation has long been the normal lot of the working masses of Europe and Asia. Even in the United States, with all the fabulous wealth of capitalism, government statistics show that in the year 1920 more than half the workers' families are undernourished, millions to the point of slow starvation." Hundreds of billions of dollars had been wasted in the waging of the 4 years of European war, and hundreds of billions more had been forfeited due to lost production and property damage. Debt and inflation had been the result—further undermining the ability of the capitalist world to recover. A League of Nations had emerged, which sought to make use of "semi-barbarian mercenaries" to restore capitalism, according to the UCP. To this had been posited the Communist International, which "calls the workers of the world to the defense of the accomplished proletarian revolution in Russia and for its extension into every other country... The Communist International unites all the conscious revolutionary forces—it issues the call for the final struggle against Capitalism." In America, the UCP, as the American section of the Comintern, would maintain an unbending revolutionary course, "the uncompromising class struggle under all circumstances and refuse to cooperate with groups or parties not committed to the revolutionary class struggle, such as the Labor Party, Socialist Party, Socialist Labor Party, Non-Partisan League, Municipal Ownership Leagues, and the like." The party would additionally join in "the mass strikes of the workers" as a means of developing "the revolutionary understanding and action through which the workers will achieve Communism." The UCP Program declares that "No ruling class in history has given up its power without a bitter struggle. The final arbiter in the struggle between the classes which is written across the pages of history is force. The working class must prepare itself for this conflict." To this end the party must at the appropriate juncture lead in the formation of workers' Councils en route to the establishment of the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," the program asserts. "There is but one solution for the ills of capitalist society, but one way for the workers to achieve freedom and human life—the way of the Revolution and the Workers' Dictatorship!" the document concludes.

## JUNE

**"Letter to the Executive Committees of the Communist Party of America and the Communist Labor Party of America from the Executive Committee of the Communist International."** [June 1920] The relations between the Communist International and the American Communist movement during its first decade of existence may very nearly be reduced to a simple theme: the Comintern sought party unity and an end to factionalism; the American Communist factions each sought to use the Comintern as a cudgel to annihilate their factional opponents. While CI funding of the American Communist movement and efforts to control its top personnel were no doubt also important, literally every interaction between New York and Moscow must be viewed through the factional prism. This is an early example, one of many, of the Comintern attempting to unify the American Communist organizations born the previous September. "The split brings much harm to the Communist Movement in America," ECCI declares, adding "It will lead to the division of the revolutionary forces, to harmful duplication and unnecessary friction and unjustifiable waste of energy on internal struggles." The letter adds that "A close study of the documents from both sides has convinced us that there are no serious differences in the programs of the two parties. There are certain differences on the question of organization." The CPA is portrayed as being more theoretically advanced, the CLP as more reflective of America's native-born workers — "thus the two parties naturally supplement each other and only by bringing them together will it be possible to create

a strong Communist Party in America." The letter hints at ECCI favoring the CLP's basic organizational model, declaring "The party must not be a conglomerate of independent, autonomous 'language federations,'" although the CLP's formal statutes calling for the use of party referenda to resolve contentious issues is specifically rejected.

**"Report to the Communist International on the Joint Convention of May 26-31, 1920,"** by the United Communist Party of America. Brief report to the Comintern about the May 26-31, 1920, joint unity convention which formed the United Communist Party. Historically important as it mentions for the first time (appended by hand in the original document) the name of the Comintern Representative to that gathering—"Comrade Agursky." [Reference is to Samuel Agursky, a name not previously identified as a CI Rep to America in the literature]. The document claims that approximately 60% of the membership of the Communist Party of America were represented in the merger—a very rosy estimate, we now know in hindsight.

## JUNE

**"Force and Violence!" (An Editorial),"** by Elmer T. Allison. [June 11, 1920] Allison, the editor of *The Ohio Socialist*, a legal weekly of the United Communist Party, writes about the irony of legislation being passed against those on the left advocating the use of "force and violence" against the government, when it was the various state and federal governments themselves that practiced "force and violence" against their opponents in the form of illegal arrests, illegal searches, physical violence against detainees. This brutality "neither averted or brought under authority" any such "threatening movement of the masses," Allison asserted. Allison further states the latest statistics on the death and destruction wrought by the recent World war (9,998,771 dead and 2,991,800 missing—world population decline of approximately 40 million between war deaths, rise in the overall death rate, decline in the birth rate—\$186 billion direct cost of the conflict, \$151.6 billion indirect cost) to point out the hypocrisy of government claims. "The world is moving swiftly toward the point where we must directly face the overthrow of the rule of capitalism, the profiteering rule of the parasites and substitute that of the masses, the producers," Allison declares.

**"At Last,"** by C.E. Ruthenberg [June 12, 1920]. This article appeared on the cover of the debut issue of the official organ of the new UCP and details the Unity Convention held May 26-31, 1920 at the Wolfskeel Resort, near Bridgman, MI, amidst wooded dunes on the sandy shore of Lake Michigan. The article declares that "the United Communist Party makes no pretense of legality. It has not attempted to express the fundamental Communist principles in a way to make them pass the censorship of its bitter enemy....The program of the party declares that the final struggle between the workers and the capitalists, between exploited and exploiter, will take the form of civil war, and that it is the function of the United Communist Party systematically to familiarize the working class with the necessity of armed insurrection as the only means through which the capitalist system can be overthrown." There is no indication that such a final battle was immediately forthcoming in America, but rather the communist movement was "nearing its goal of the Workers' Dictatorship for the transformation of capitalism in Germany, in Italy and the other European countries." The logic of the situation

would force the best elements of the “faction” remaining outside of the UCP to join forces with the party or follow the path of the Socialist Labor Party into oblivion as an ineffectual sect, the article indicated.

**“The Convention of Revolutionists,”** by I.E. Ferguson. [June 12, 1920] The definitive first-hand account of the 1920 Bridgman Unity Convention between the Communist Labor Party and the Ruthenberg faction of the Communist Party of America—a week-long gathering which resulted in the formation of the United Communist Party of America. Ferguson gives an even-handed account of the debates and tribulations facing the delegates, as they attempted to hammer out eight months of ill will on the sandy shores of Lake Michigan. Delegates to the convention included 32 former affiliates of the Ruthenberg faction of the Communist Party of America, 25 members of the former Communist Labor Party, one fraternal delegate, and CI Representative Agursky—whose influence seems to have been very limited. The gathering came to terms on an organizational program and eventually elected a 10 member Central Executive Committee consisting of five members of each former organization. Includes copious explanatory footnotes, a biography and photograph of Comintern rep Samuel Agursky, and a color photo of what may have been one of the caucus meeting sites as it appears today.

**“The First CEC Meeting of the United Communist Party,” [published June 12, 1920].** Immediately after the conclusion of the 1920 Bridgman Unity Convention the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party held its first meeting. A system of 11 regional districts was decided upon. The group also elected officers for the organization, including Alfred Wagenknecht [“Meyer”] as National Secretary and C.E. Ruthenberg [“Damon”] as Editor of the group’s official organ, *The Communist*, an 8 x 11 inch newsprint magazine issued biweekly. Dues were raised to 75 cents per month, effective July 1, and wages for UCP officials were set at \$50/week for married and \$40/week for unmarried party workers. This account of the CEC’s activities was published in the debut issue of *The Communist*. The report includes footnotes and the identities of pseudonyms in this version.

**“Impressions of the Convention,”** by ‘R. Newman’ [published June 22 & July 15, 1920]. An alternative account of the May 26-31, 1920, Bridgman Unity Convention that joined the Ruthenberg “minority” wing of the CPA with the CLP to establish the United Communist Party of America. The author, “R. Newman,” was a left wing Jewish Federationist associated with the CPA caucus and he describes the proceedings from the perspective of the 10 member CPA “left” group. The consistency and radicalism of the program was of central concern to this group, which managed to have inserted explicit revolutionary clauses related to “mass action,” “the dictatorship of the proletariat,” and the necessity of armed force in the transition from capitalism. Ruthenberg is portrayed as caring more about jobs than matters of principle and his decision to resign from the CEC as soon as the delegates associated with the former CLP were won 5 of the 9 positions is cast as a blatantly hypocritical act. The CPA “left” group “were disappointed with the leaders of the party, with their conduct. They were indignant about Damon [Ruthenberg], who used his position to force his demands on the convention,” “Newman” states. This document originally appeared in the Yiddish language edition of the UCP’s official organ and was translated in the Sept. 1, 1920, edition of the CPA “majority”

group's official organ as a means of undercutting the interpretations of Ruthenberg and Ferguson of the convention.

**"Ruling of Judge George W. Anderson on the Petition for Habeus Corpus of 20 Alien Members of the CPA: Boston, MA," by William J. West [June 23, 1920]**" On June 23, 1920, US District Court Judge George W. Anderson ruled at Boston, MA, an opinion on a petition of habeus corpus filed on behalf of 20 incarcerated members of the Communist Party of America. Anderson found "There is no evidence that the Communist Party is an organization advocating the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force or violence. Hence all the petitioners ordered deported are entitled to be discharged from the custody of the Immigration authorities." Anderson ordered the defendants released, subject to the government's appeal to higher authority. This decision proved controversial, and newspapers throughout the region weighed in editorially on the matter—the views of the *Boston Post*, *Traveler*, and *Transcript* being excerpted here."

**"Letter to Rachele Ragozin in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg in Chicago, June 24, 1920."** In the middle of April 1920, the 37-year old C.E. Ruthenberg was despondent with the unending factional war in the Communist Party of America, seemingly unhappy in New York City and pondering aloud his desire to quit the party and come back home to his wife Rose and son in Cleveland. Yet duty called, the April 1920 split of his faction from the CPA gave way to a May 1920 unity convention which established the United Communist Party. Just when he thought he was out, Ruthenberg was pulled back in. With political prosecutions facing him in two states and the factional war unabated, somehow Ruthenberg found a second wind. This letter, documenting the start of a new love, helps to partially explain the UCP leader's abrupt change in mentality. Ruthenberg is headed from Chicago to Pittsburgh on party business and he makes arrangements with his "Sweet," Rachele Ragozin, to meet him there. Their meeting is to be a brief one on Sunday morning: "You will be able to leave Pittsburgh Sunday night and be back in time for school Monday," Ruthenberg assures her.

**"Letter to Rachele Ragozin in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg in Chicago, June 26, 1920."** [excerpt] In this follow-up to the letter of June 24, the love-smitten C.E. Ruthenberg offers party employment to his girlfriend, offering her work as a special "messenger" carrying out underground missions for UCP Technical Director L.E. Katterfeld. Presumably the tasks with which Ragozin would have been involved related to production and distribution of illegal party publications or the transfer of funds. "It will be dangerous, you may get locked up, but I think you can have it if you want it. We might arrange that the messenger stay very close to the editor [Ruthenberg]—and to a telephone. Will that be 'nice'? We will talk about it when I see you," Ruthenberg remarks.

**"The Great Conspiracy."** (leaflet of the National Defense Committee) [c. June 28, 1920] Text of a rare four page leaflet of the National Defense Committee, a defense organization closely linked to the United Communist Party initially established circa June 1920 for the joint legal

defense of 127 defendants indicted in Illinois for violation of state “criminal syndicalism” laws for having participated in the founding conventions of the Communist Labor Party and the Communist Party of America. Jury selection in the first mass trial, that of the CLP, had begun on May 10, 1920, the leaflet indicates. Some seven weeks later, after 1200 prospective jurors were examined and tens of thousands of dollars spent on the case, the jury was still not empaneled. This flyer was sent out along with a fundraising form for the collection of funds to aid in the defense effort. Particularly useful is the lengthy list of those indicted in the case — while not a complete roster of attendees of the two founding conventions, at least a substantial section. Also worthy of note is that a mass trial of the CPA was planned to follow the mass trial of the CLP, to have included about twice as many defendants — a trial which never took place despite the conviction of all CLP members in the first mass trial.

## JULY

### **“Don’t Be So Sure of Your Job!”** (leaflet #2 of the United Communist Party) [circa July 1920]

Aside from publishing newspapers and giving speeches to one another at various meetings and conventions, the only “revolutionary” activity conducted by the underground Communist movement of the early 1920s involved the periodic mass distribution of cheaply printed newsprint leaflets. These were printed in runs running into the hundreds of thousands and then stealthily scattered around various industrial cities of the north over the course of one or a few dark nights. This “leaflet no. 2” of the United Communist Party from the summer of 1920 attempts to turn the fear of unemployment into mass strike action: “Force the government to take care of [the unemployed]! Fight for shorter hours with no reduction of pay, so they can get back on the job! Fight for opening up trade with Soviet Russia, so there will be work!” These strikes would be met with opposition, the leaflet noted: “Of course, the courts will issue injunctions against us. The government will send troops against us. Soldiers, police, thugs, legionnaires, and vigilantes will be lined up against us.” There was a solution, however, painted in rosy hues: “The Russian workers showed us what to do. They overthrew their BOSSES’ government and set up a WORKERS’ Government. They took over the industries and ran them ONLY for the workers. They threw out all idlers and bloodsuckers! They put an end to unemployment. They became the OWNERS OF THEIR JOBS!”

### **“At Last’ the Centrists Unite! (‘A Convention of Revolutionists!’)”** by Maximilian Cohen.

[July 1, 1920] A long, bitter, and biting critique of the May 26-31 Bridgman Unity Convention that joined the Ruthenberg “minority” faction of the CPA with the Communist Labor Party to form the United Communist Party of America. Cohen takes on, in paragraph-by-paragraph fashion, the accounts of the convention rendered by both C.E. Ruthenberg in his article “At Last,” and I.E. Ferguson in his “The Convention of Revolutionists.” Cohen’s ridicule makes clear that the “unity” of the convention was partial at best, with frequent reconsiderations of decided votes made to preserve “unity” “up to and including an overturning of the elections for the 9 member CEC of the group when then CLP garnered 5 of the positions. Ruthenberg is characterized as obsessed with organizational control rather than issues of principle and the new organization is derided by Cohen as “the United Centrist Party of America.”

**“It Will Be Made Worthwhile,”** by Isaac E. Ferguson [July 3, 1920] Article from the UCP’s official organ by top Ruthenberg lieutenant I.E. Ferguson, of Chicago. Ferguson explains the recent split in the CPA as the by-product of bloc voting by a 5 or 6 person majority on the CEC, with the minority allowed “no open forums through which to rally the membership against the majority.” By the end of March, Ferguson was frustrated to the point of no longer pretending that there was any sort of unanimity on the CEC, dominated as it was by the group lead by Nicholas Hourwich. Ferguson states that he turned his attention to writing about the history of the Left Wing movement, hoping to obliquely show “that only by the most decisive action could the party be saved from the impotency of a CEC dominated by Andrew [Hourwich] & Co.” Ferguson states that “the Left Wing movement, and thereby the Communist Party, had been artificially diverted into the political plaything of a few Russian-speaking leaders who had stultified the growth of the Left Wing and had paralyzed the Communist Party by taking out of it all realism of an actual functioning organization in the United States.” To his surprise, a factional split erupted, based around the Chicago District Committee (headed by DO Leonid Belsky). By April 20 “a decisive split had become unavoidable” and Ferguson set his historical study aside to instead engage in practical politics in the new factional environment.

**“The Party Organization - 1: The Group and its Functions,”** by the United Communist Party [July 3, 1920] First of a three part series by the newly organized United Communist Party from its official organ explaining details of organizational structure to the party membership. This article deals with the primary party unit of the UCP—the “group” of approximately 10 members (and not fewer than 5, whenever possible). Groups were primarily organized on a territorial basis, alternatively on the basis of their members speaking the same language, and were to each elect a “group organizer” to serve as the conduit of dues, instructions, and party publications with the next higher level of the organization. Shop organization is regarded as an important task for the future with a view to forming “industrial groups”: “When 2 or more party members are employed in the same place or are members of the same union, they should constitute themselves a committee for the conduct of propaganda in that shop or union. As new members are found in the shops or unions, they should be added to the existing committee or constitute a committee together with the original party worker, and as these committees increase to at least 5 members, they will constitute industrial groups of the party.”

**“A Farewell to Controversy,”** by C.E. Ruthenberg [July 3, 1920] Lengthy analysis of the April 1920 split of the CPA from the perspective of factional leader C.E. Ruthenberg. Ruthenberg traces the origin of the split to a unanimous resolution of the Chicago District Committee in early April 1920 stating that “unless decisions of the Central Executive Committee in regard to organization problems and on charges against members of that body could be satisfactorily explained in a personal conference, the Chicago District Committee would refuse to recognize the authority of the CEC and [issue a call for] a conference of district organizations, and through such a conference call a national convention.” Ruthenberg says that he met with the Chicago District Committee (headed by Leonid Belsky) and convinced them to remain in the organization until the convocation of a forthcoming national convention, but that the CEC majority group (headed by Nicholas Hourwich) had move to take reprisals against the Chicago organization, which effectively “broke the unity of the party.” Ruthenberg characterizes the CPA’s demand for the return of the party funds with which Ruthenberg absconded as “the shallowest kind of hypocrisy,” since to demand compliance by Ruthenberg, “who spoke for a

majority of the party and who was supported by a majority of the District Organizers and Federation representatives present at the meeting at which the break took place," meant an appeal to "that mawkish, sentimental legalism which gives the lie to the pretensions of being simon-pure Bolsheviks, which the Federation group so loudly proclaims itself." Ruthenberg — the majority of whose own faction was comprised of non-english language groups — repeated refers to the CPA majority group as the "Federation group" and to the party as "the Federation of Federations, 3 or 4 separate parties loosely united by an Executive Committee." He claims that the UCP includes at least 60 percent of the membership of the former CPA and calls for the "absorption" of the remaining members of the "Federation group" into the new organization.

**"Minutes of the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party of America, July 1-2, 1920."** Minutes of the July gathering of the CEC of the United Communist Party. Chief in importance is the ongoing allegations against National Organizer Leonid Belsky ("Fisher"); allegations against him were related and the CEC moved into Executive Session (not reported in these minutes) to attempt to resolve the matter. A number of routine organizational matters, including the moving of the UCP's Russian organ to New York and the dispatch of the yet-unidentified CEC member "Simon" into the field to conduct German and Hungarian organizing activities. The CEC resolves to "press the work of organizing party Finnish groups aggressively" and to name a Finnish "Editor-Organizer"—a position for which the names "Tiala" and "Ranta" are put forward. Alexander Bittelman wrote the CEC on behalf of the former Jewish Federation and was to address this meeting—probably held in Chicago—on July 3 (no record of this event extant).

**"Published Summary of the Meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party."** [events of July 1-3, 1920] Rather than official minutes, this is the published summary of the July 1-3, 1920 plenum of the CEC of the United Communist Party, as published in its underground official organ, *The Communist*. No names (or pseudonyms) are provided, limiting the value of the information here. With respect to the ultra-rare non-English variants of this official organ, it is stated that German, Polish, Russian, Croatian, and Yiddish variants of Issue No. 1 had been published, with similar editions of No. 2 in preparation, following the recently released English edition of No. 2. A Lithuanian language paper, perhaps with a different title and content, was in preparation. The CEC determined at its July session to additionally issue *The Communist* in Finnish and Hungarian. Outreach to other language groups was to take place through multiple editions of the Program and Constitution of the UCP, which was to be issued in Italian, Spanish, Swedish, and Latvian, the CEC decided. English Editor-in-Chief C.E. Ruthenberg was given the power by motion of the CEC to direct publication of specific articles in all the above-mentioned non-English editions of the underground organ. An itemized financial statement showed nearly \$20,000 remaining in the group's coffers, with June expenses outstripping organizational income by a factor of 4 in that period.

**"The Party Organization - 2: The Group Organizer,"** by the United Communist Party [July 17, 1920] Second of a three part series by the newly organized United Communist Party from its official organ explaining details of organizational structure to the party membership. This installment deals with the NCOs of the party apparatus— the "group organizers" elected by

each primary party unit. Group organizers and their elected alternates were charged with memorizing and keeping track of the names and addresses of members of the underground groups. They were to collect and forward the 75 cent monthly dues to their contacts at the next higher level of party organization ("branch organizers"), from whom they were to receive party communications and publications for distribution to group members. Group organizers were also to transmit comments and criticism about party policies made by rank and file group members up the administrative ladder. Up to 10 group organizers were to be combined as a "branch committee," which was to elect its own "branch organizer" to serve as a conduit with the next higher level of party organization. "Whether the group functions efficiently in carrying on the work of the party is largely dependent upon the group organizer," the article notes.

### **["May It Please the Court": Trial of Communist Labor Party Commences. State Opens Its Side. Trial Expected to Last 6 Weeks,](#)** by Jack Carney [July 12, 1920]

On July 12, 1920, a mass trial of 21 members of the Communist Labor Party was begun in Chicago, charged with violation of the Illinois "Overthrow Statute," which "makes it unlawful for any person openly to advocate, by word of mouth, or by writing, the reformation or overthrow of the government by violence or any other unlawful means." This initial news report by defendant Jack Carney includes an extensive excerpt of the opening statement of the prosecution, delivered by Assistant State Attorney Lloyd D. Heth. Heth asserted: "We are going to show that these defendants, besides stating that they stand by the Moscow manifesto [of the Comintern], also expressly state in their platform and program that they stand for the overthrow of the government of the United States and all states, the capture of the power of the state, and vesting it in the dictatorship of the proletariat. They state that in accomplishing this end, the use of the political machinery is only of secondary importance; that not one of the great teachers of socialism has ever said it is possible to achieve the socialist revolution by the ballot. They advocate mass action—in other words, proceeding from the shops and factories to capture and annihilate the apparatus of government. They tell the workers the constitution of the United States can not be amended in their behalf, and therefore it must be destroyed."

### **["Acting Secretary's Report to the Second Convention of the Communist Party of America, July 13, 1920,](#)** by Charles Dirba.

An extremely important document which lists in summary form the receipts and expenditures of the old Communist Party of America during the interval between its formation in September 1919 and its Second Convention, which began July 13, 1920. During this period the party showed a total income of about \$62,500—of which almost \$26,000 came from dues receipts and special assessments, another \$6,800 in loans, and nearly \$7,000 from the sale of literature—leaving an *absolute maximum* of about \$22,000 that might be attributed to Comintern subsidies. Further, an official membership series for the organization is provided (October 1919 to May 1920) as well as a demographic analysis by federation of the party's membership before the Palmer Raids, after the Palmer Raids, and after the split of the Ruthenberg/Ferguson group in April 1920. "Positively not over 28%" of the CPA's membership left with Ruthenberg, according to Dirba's analysis.

### **["Letter to Walter H. Evans, District Attorney of Multnomah County, Oregon, in Portland from J. Edgar Hoover, Special Assistant to the Attorney General, in](#)**

**Washington, March 24, 1920.**" This letter from the young chief of Anti-Radical operations in the United States to the Multnomah County, Oregon District Attorney follows up on a January communication by Evans with a member of Congress, in which he provided a copy of an IWW resolution endorsing the 3rd International. Hoover responds to Evans' request as to whether such an endorsement would make membership in the IWW a deportable offense by noting that the final determination in this matter had been vested by Congress in the Secretary of Labor rather than the Attorney General. Hoover notes the ruling of the Labor Department that membership in the Communist Party of America was sufficient grounds for deportation under the law of October 1918 and anticipated a similar ruling against membership in the Communist Labor Party, since "in principles and tactics, both parties are identical." Hoover makes no mention about any similar move to rule membership in the IWW illegal per se for non-citizens of the United States.

### **"What is Attorney General Palmer Doing? Letter to an Unnamed NYC Magazine Editor."** [Jan. 27, 1920]

This article publishes in full a letter sent out by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer to the editor of an unnamed major American magazines, attempting to shape coverage of the Justice Department's recent mass arrests of non-citizen members of the Communist Party of America. Palmer indicates that he is "taking the liberty of sending to you photostatic copies of original documents published by various branches of the Communist Press in Russia and in the United States." Included among these are programmatic documents, manifestos, and leaflets, along with one manifesto by the anarchist Union of Russian Workers. "My one desire is to acquaint people like you with the real menace of evil-thinking which is the foundation of the Red movement," Mitchell declares. The liberal magazine The Nation, in publishing the leaked correspondence of Mitchell Palmer charges the Attorney General with hypocrisy for charging radicals with "the sabotizing of public thought" while at the same time himself carrying out an "unblushing effort at propaganda."

### **"Principles and Decisions of Individual Cases of Alleged Membership in the Communist Party of America," by Louis F. Post** [circa March 1920]

The 1919 to 1920 frenzy of raids and deportations launched by J. Edgar Hoover and A. Mitchell Palmer was effectively stymied by the principled action of one man, Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis F. Post. Post, a former magazine editor and advocate of the "Single Tax" theories of Henry George, was the Labor Department official in charge of immigration, official approval of whom was necessary for any deportation order to be executed. Contrary to the desires of the law-and-order conservatives in the Department of Justice and their ally, Commissioner General of Immigration Anthony Caminetti, Post required that those selected for deportation be afforded careful individual treatment according to the rule of law — resulting in the cancellation by the Labor Department of a large number of its deportation orders. This is an official memorandum by Post detailing his findings on the American Communist movement. While Post finds that simple membership in the Communist Party of America is sufficient to constitute cause for deportation under the wording of the Immigration Act of October 16, 1918, he indicates that merely signing an application card, having one's name appear on a membership list, or gaining membership automatically through membership in a group joining the CPA *en bloc* was not of itself sufficient. Rather, Post states that government authorities must show "satisfactory proof of individual activities or declarations tending to show knowledge of the character of the organization." In addition to raising the burden of proof for deportation, Post adds a subjective

component, stating "When the accused alien appears to be a person of good general character, fit for American citizenship, except for the accusation in hand, and there is reasonable doubt of his membership, the warrant will be canceled." Post's politically courageous position halted the Justice Department's rush towards mass deportations but generated a major political controversy when the Hoover-Palmer forces pushed back in the halls of Congress.

**"Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Communist Party of America: New York City — July 13 - 18, 1920."** No stenogram was kept of any underground convention of the Communist Labor Party, the United Communist Party, or the Communist Party of America — but several sets of minutes of these gatherings have survived. This document publishes the official minutes of the 2nd Convention of the (old) Communist Party of America — that is, the majority group remaining after the split of Ruthenberg, Belsky, Lovestone, and their co-thinkers. A total of 26 delegates, 5 non-voting members of the Central Executive Committee, and several fraternal delegates representing the Federations were in attendance at this 6 day gathering held at some undisclosed location in New York City. The number of dues paying and dues exempt members of the organization was given as 6,256 by the Credentials Committee, with nearly 1/3 of the organization concentrated in the New York City district. None of the CPA's 5 districts was based farther west than Chicago or farther south than Philadelphia, emphasizing that it was for all intents and purposes a Northeastern organization. Clearly padded federation reports claimed memberships of 3200 for the Lithuanian Federation, 2500 for the Russian, and between 1700 and 1800 for the Ukrainian — the three pillars of the CPA. The convention formally endorsed the 3rd International's stand on parliamentarism, while indicating "we consider the use of the bourgeois parliament as of secondary importance and for revolutionary propaganda and agitation only." Amendments were made to the Constitution and Program of the organization. All delegates used pseudonyms, few of which have been properly identified. Further complicating matters, on its third day the convention voted to change pseudonyms of all of these delegates.

**"Motions and Resolutions Adopted at the 2nd Convention of the Communist Party of America: New York — July 13 to 18, 1920."** Complete set of resolutions passed by the 2nd National Convention of the (old) Communist Party of America. Included are official greetings to the Comintern and the government of Soviet Russia, as well as resolutions on Soviets, Unity with the United Communist Party, legal workers groups, youth groups, and legal defense. A financial resolution calling for all parties to donate one full day's worth of wages to the support of the organization was also passed. With regards to young people, the CPA set a minimum age requirement of 17 for full membership, with those younger than that age to participate in special educational groups run by the Sub-District organizations. With respect to unity with the UCP, a hard line is taken: "Unity with the UCP as a party of Centrists is impossible. We can unite only with such of their membership or parts of the UCP that will repudiate their Centrist leadership and join the Communist Party on the basis of our principles, program, and tactics."

**"Program of the Communist Party of America Adopted at its Second Convention."**

[adopted July 18, 1920] Adoption of a new party program was considered by its participants to

be one of the most important actions of the 2nd Convention of the (old) Communist Party of America in July 1920. The CPA saw the proletariat's tasks as universal rather than subject to national specificity, declaring "the problems of the American working class are identical with the problems of the workers of the world." It was up to the working class and its vanguard party to "conquer political power, destroy the bourgeois state machinery, and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of a Soviet Government in the transition period from capitalism to Communism," the Program declared. Capitalist rule was fundamentally violent, the CPA asserted, with bourgeois democracy a façade masking the "lies, demagogism, persecution, slander, and bribery" actually back of the system. "The proletariat cannot yield itself to the artificial rules devised by its mortal enemy but not observed by the enemy. To do so would be to make a mockery of the proletarian struggle for power," the CPA declares. While endorsing revolutionary industrial unionism, the CPA emphatically rejects the IWW as a vehicle, indicating that it "rejects the basic principles of the Communist International — mass action, proletarian dictatorship, and Soviet power. It rejects the idea of armed insurrection and the use of force in the time of revolution" as well as "the necessity of destroying the capitalist state." Rather, the Communist Party is itself envisioned as the vehicle for the mobilization of the trade union movement to revolutionary ends.

**"The Negro Question in America: Speech at the 2nd World Congress of the Communist International,"** by John Reed [July 25, 1920] Speech by the Communist Labor Party's man in Moscow, John Reed, to the 2nd Congress of the Comintern in Moscow on the so-called Negro Question in America. Ten million American blacks, concentrated mostly in the South, had been held in subjugation with no legal rights, Reed asserts—not seriously organized either by the AFL unions or the Socialist Party and facing segregation and the lawlessness of lynching. It was only after the Spanish-American war, in which black troops had served with equal capacity to white troops, that "aggressive class consciousness" emerged among American blacks, Reed states. It was during this war in which a movement emerged for social and political equality. The enlistment of half a million black Americans in the armed forces during the European war further accelerated this trend, Reed indicates, with a simultaneous mass migration of blacks from the rural South to the industrial North to work in the factories. "The return of the army from the front threw many millions of white workers on to the labor market all at once. The result was unemployment, and the demobilized soldiers' impatience took such threatening proportions that the employers were forced to tell the soldiers that their jobs had been taken by Negroes in order thus to incite the whites to massacre the Negroes," Reed declares. Race riots followed in Washington, DC, Chicago, Omaha, and elsewhere. "In all these fights the Negroes showed for the first time in history that they are armed and splendidly organized and are not at all afraid of the whites," Reed declares. "If we consider the Negroes as an enslaved and oppressed people, then they pose us with two tasks: on the one hand a strong racial movement and on the other a strong proletarian workers' movement, whose class consciousness is quickly growing. The Negroes do not pose the demand of national independence," Reed asserts.

**"The Party Organization - 3: Other Party Officials and Committees,"** by the United Communist Party [July 31, 1920] Third of a three part series by the newly organized United Communist Party from its official organ explaining details of organizational structure to the party membership. The article deals with the branch committees and their elected organizer, which

passed collected dues and rank and file comments upward to the Sub-District Organizer (SDO) and transmitted party directives and publications downward to the group organizers. The largest Sub-Districts, containing 750 or 1000 members or more were to have an additional layer of administration called a “section,” combining up to 10 branches. SDOs were to be appointed by the District Committee and to work under the supervision of the Sub-District Committee, composed of the various branch (or section) organizers. Each Sub-District was to hold a semi-annual conference. It was the duty of SDOs to extend the organization into unorganized cities and towns by finding and enlisting sympathetic individuals into the party and establishing group organizations. The top layer of decentralized party leadership was to be the District Organizers (DOs) appointed by the Central Executive Committee to head the 11 districts of the UCP. The DOs were to be important administrators, “equal in importance to that which the National Secretary held in the open organizations,” according to the article, adding that “they must maintain a close contact with every sub-district in their territory, visit these sub-districts from time to time and see that the work of the party is performed properly. In cooperation with the District Committees they must develop organization plans and put them into practice.”

## AUGUST

**“The Political Prisoners at Dannemora”** by I.E. Ferguson. This is a first hand account of a July 1920 prison visit by the attorney to the first four New York political prisoners ensnared in the state’s new “Criminal Syndicalism” law—Benjamin Gitlow, Gus Alonen, Harry Winitsky, and James Larkin. The four were held in captivity at Dannemora State Prison. Gitlow (CLP), Alonen (IWW), Winitsky (CPA), and Larkin (CLP) were prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced under a draconian state law which made mere membership in radical political and labor organizations a criminal offense.

**“Stand by Soviet Russia: Proclamation of the United Communist Party of America.”** [circa Aug. 1, 1920] Annotated machine-readable pdf of a rare leaflet of the newly-launched United Communist Party of America. The leaflet argues that the World War was a result of the struggle of capitalist governments for markets and profits and had never really ended, with attention turned Eastward following the German collapse. “Ever since the workers of Russia overthrew the capitalists and landowners who robbed and exploited them, the capitalist governments of the world have been scheming to destroy the Soviet Government the workers established,” the leaflet declares. Poland had attacked Soviet Ukraine under “orders from London, Paris, and Washington” but had been halted, according to the UCP document. Now the combined forces and funds of Britain, France, and the United States were being put back of the Polish effort. American workers are implored to follow the example of the workers of England, Italy, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia. “Refuse to manufacture munitions! Refuse to transport them! Refuse to do anything that will help the Allied Imperialists to make war on Soviet Russia!” the leaflet demands.

**“Challenge of the Mandates of the CPA Delegation to the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, August 5, 1920.”** The CPA dispatched two representatives to

Moscow to serve as its delegates at the 2nd Congress (Louis C. Fraina and Alexander Stoklitsky) prior to the Bridgman Unity Convention of May 1920. The majority of the members of the old CPA refused to join the United Communist Party of America at this time, resulting in the continued existence of two communist organizations in America. After the conclusion of the Unity Convention, UCP member Edward Lindgren ["Flynn"] was sent to Moscow to serve as a Comintern Congress delegate, joining three other members of the former CLP already there: former CLP International Delegates John Reed and Alexander Bilan, as well as Eadmonn MacAlpine. Lindgren brought news of the Unity Convention and the group decided to press for Comintern ratification of the new party by unseating the CPA delegation. No information on the Unity Convention and continued split had arrived from the old CPA, however, and the Credentials Commission, reluctant to make a ruling on the basis of incomplete information, upheld the mandates of Fraina and Stoklitsky. This decision, ratified by a 19-9 vote on the floor of the Congress, recognized the UCP as the majority party in America and accorded its delegates 6 votes, while the old CPA was regarded as the minority party and allocated 4 votes. This is the stenographic report of the brief debate on this matter, Lindgren speaking for the UCP and Fraina for the old CPA.

**["Appeal to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from the UCP Delegation to the 2nd World Congress of the Comintern, August 6th, 1920.."](#)**

The first thing UCP delegate to the 2nd World Congress of the Comintern Edward Lindgren did upon arriving in Moscow was to attempt to have the delegates of the Communist Party of America unseated. Unfortunately for him, his arrival was in the waning days of the 3 week gathering and the Mandate Commission refused to act upon his request. This resulted in a de jure recognition of both the UCP and the CPA—rendering the practical effect of the merger between the CLP and the Ruthenberg faction of the old CPA into the UCP to naught. This final appeal was written to ECCI by the American CLP/UCP delegation (Bilan, Lindgren, MacAlpine, and Reed) attempting to obtain the CI's mantle of authenticity, thus effectively forcing the irreconcilable wing of the old CPA to join the United Communist Party to stay within the Comintern's orbit. The case of John Anderson is provided as an example of the old CPA's two-faced nature and dishonesty—with Anderson's repudiation of the Jan. 1920 unity document he signed with Reed and his perceived absconding with CI funds to the irreconcilable old CPA held up as examples of the rival party's bad faith.

**["Circular to All Units of the CPA on the "One Day's Pay" Campaign from Louis Shapiro \["L. Bain"\], Executive Secretary, Aug. 8, 1920."](#)** Louis Shapiro is one of the least well known of the approximately 10 individuals who served as Executive Secretary of one of the various parties and factions of the American Communist movement during its first decade, having served briefly as head of the old CPA during the second half of 1920. This circular is a rather desperate plea for funds: the 2nd Convention of the CPA [July 13-18, 1920] had unanimously approved a campaign for the donation of "One Day's Pay for Organization." Shapiro declares that "To carry out our purpose of 'organization of the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat'—requires organizers. Organizes, in order to be able to devote their whole time for organizational purposes must have means.... A paragraph in the summary of our program states that 'The Communist Party shall systematically and persistently propagate to the workers the idea of the inevitability of a violent revolution and the USE OF FORCE as the only means of overthrowing the capitalist state.' Systematic and persistent propaganda to the

workers must be done, to a large extent, by means of leaflets. But to issue leaflets means are needed." Shapiro urges immediate action: "You comrades, must get to work NOW." (This is not the language of an organization purportedly awash in untold millions of dollars of Comintern cash, it should be noted well, nor would shaking down \$15,000 or whatever from the membership have been a high priority activity.)

**"Summary of District Organizer Reports of the United Communist Party."** [August 8, 1920]

Internal document relating district-by-district membership status and organizational structure of the fledgling United Communist Party of America. Worthy of mention is the fact that the UCP—unlike the rival (old) CPA—had districts west of Chicago (St. Louis, Denver, San Francisco, Portland). Unfortunately no report on membership for the all-important New York district appears, but one can roughly extrapolate a paid membership in the ballpark of 6,000 from the numbers showing. Similarly, one can conclude from the cash receipt and expenditure figures showing that the party's financial situation was not strong.

**"Two Resolutions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International on**

**America, August 8, 1920."** Two very short ECCI resolutions on American matters. The first sets a 2 month deadline (October 10, 1920) for amalgamation of the two American Communist Parties. This deadline later extended to January 1921 by action of the ECCI taken on September 20, 1920. The second resolution gives clearance to Louis Fraina to "take a responsible position in the American Labor movement" indicating that Fraina held the confidence of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in the face of allegations that he was a spy.

**"Financial Needs of the American Delegation: A Budget Proposal to the Comintern**

**from the UCP, August 1920."** After Edward Lindgren made it to Moscow with news of the May 1920 formation of the United Communist Party, joining the CLP with the Ruthenberg wing of the Communist Party of American, the CLP delegation in Moscow terminated their working agreement with CPA reps Stoklitsky and Hourwich and began to act on their own as the sole legitimate representatives of the American Communist movement. In the first half of August 1920 they submitted the following budget, seeking a \$210,000 appropriation for the combined American movement. Notations in the margin lend some evidence that the requested amount was scaled back to \$25,000—a number which may well have been matched for the Communist Party of America "majority." This document includes a supplementary discussion by Tim Davenport entitled "Rubles and Budgets" directly challenging the assertion published by Messrs. Klehr, Haynes, and Firsov that "in this period the Comintern supplied the tiny American Communist movement with the equivalent of several million dollars in valuables..."

**"Letter from the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party in New**

**York to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow, August 12, 1920."** This letter to the Comintern from the governing Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party of America acknowledges the receipt of a mandate for unity between

the Communist Labor Party and the Communist Party of America and presents the case that the formation of the UCP represents the fulfillment of this instruction. However “a minority faction of the Communist Party still stands outside this unity. This faction is composed of part of the membership of the Lettish [Latvian], Ukrainian, Russian, and Lithuanian Federations of the Communist Party,” the UCP letter declares. Various party policies of the new organization are delineated for the Comintern, including “unlimited struggle for the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the power of the working class” and a staunch industrial unionist orientation hostile to the AF of L and supportive of the IWW as the best organizational type for the pursuit of this goal. “At this time, unfortunately, this general propaganda of the IWW has discredited this organization among the Communists; but it is yet to be seen whether the IWW membership will longer tolerate this propaganda. It is important for us to bring into the IWW an understanding of Communism, through our educational work and through the influence of the Communists who now belong to the IWW. As things now stand it is impossible for the United Communist Party to act in association with the IWW,” the letter states. Foreign language organization was to be limited to propaganda organizations under central control and the structure of the organization was to be “on an illegal basis only,” according to the letter.

**“UCP Membership Bulletin #1.”** [Aug. 14, 1920] In addition to a biweekly official organ, the United Communist Party began issuing a periodic mimeographed membership bulletin, of which this August 14, 1920 issue was the first. The publication was distributed by District Organizers through “party channels” down to the (10 person) group level—with the bulletin to be read at the meeting by the group captain and then immediately destroyed. The bulletin was to be the vehicle for the transmission of internal party news, it is noted. The bulletin announces the launching of a “\$50,000 Organization fund,” with each group given the task of raising “\$50, or \$5 per member.” This implies a party membership of about 10,000, it should be noted. Over complaints from two districts, party wage levels are defended by unanimous decision of the CEC: “The wage for these full-time Party workers had to be governed somewhat by the cost of living. Last year [1919] both the CP and the CLP paid \$45 per week to married men. Since then the cost of living for families has gone up far more than the increase of \$5 made by the CEC of the UCP. The standard that we have set is lower than the pay of skilled workers in the trades.” The election of Abram Jakira as organizer (effectively the secretary) of the party’s Russian language federation is ratified by the CEC, but the decision of the recently completed UCP Russian language Conference to establish a “Russian National Propaganda Committee” is sternly condemned and ordered by the CEC to disband or face expulsion (the UCP being based upon a strongly centralized unitary party rather than as a federation of semi-autonomous language groups as was the rival CPA). Changes are made in the District Organizers in the Chicago and Kansas City/St. Louis Districts, and a scheduled frequency for publication in non-English languages is decided. The UCP scheduled publication its OO in English, Russian, Polish, and Hungarian twice a month; German, Finnish , and Croatian; and occasionally in Jewish, Estonian, and Lithuanian.

**“To the Manager of the Communist International” from Louis C. Fraina, August 15, 1920.** Louis Fraina, one of two delegates of the Communist Party of America to the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, dispatched this protest letter to “the manager of the Communist International” in response to the United Communist Party’s attempt to receive the exclusive funding of the American Communist movement. “The two delegations, in accordance

with the Executive Committee's decision for unity, had agreed to work as one delegation; but in this (as in other matters) the United Communist Party delegation is acting for itself, and not for the whole American delegation and the whole American movement," Fraina charged. Fraina suggested that to avert future factional disputes "the American appropriation be made for the whole movement, and that it be given only to the Central Committee of the completely unified Party, on conditions determined by the Executive Committee of the International," with a small interim appropriation made to cover the costs of immediate work until unity was achieved—a process which Fraina thought would take "a few months to achieve."

### **["Statement of the CEC of the United Communist Party Regarding the Charges](#)**

**[Against Louis C. Fraina."](#)** [Aug. 15, 1920] The very first plenary session of the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party appointed an investigating committee to examine the charge being bandied about that Louis C. Fraina of the rival Communist Party of America, one of three members of the Pan-American Bureau of the Comintern, was actually a police spy. Finnish radical Santeri Nuorteva, formerly of the Russian Soviet Government Bureau, was chief among those charging Fraina with duplicity. A former DoJ informant named Peterson made the specific charges that on September 7 and November 15 and a third date in 1919 he had seen Fraina in the department's New York offices and that he had seen canceled checks signed by Fraina in his personal file. Fraina successfully proved that he was in Chicago on September 7, the last day of the CPA's founding convention, and "during the cross-examination of Peterson by those present many dubious points as to his motives and as to the reliability of his story were developed." The investigation committee found the charges of Peterson, repeated by Nuorteva, to be without merit and exonerated Fraina—a verdict here affirmed by the full CEC of the UCP.

### **["The Letter from the International: UCP Reply to the ECCI Letter to America of June](#)**

**[1920."](#)** [Aug. 15, 1920] During the Russian Civil War and the Western blockade of Soviet Russia, communication between the Communist International in Moscow and the American Communist movement in New York was slow and haphazard. A June 1920 letter from ECCI only found print in the United Communist Party's Press in the middle of August. This document reprints the official reply of the governing Central Executive Committee to ECCI's categorical demand that the UCP and its rival, the Communist Party of America, immediately unite. The UCP affirms its willingness to unite, but then goes on to launch into an extensive criticism of the program of the "Federation group of the Communist Party" with respect to mass action, industrial unionism, shop organizations, and legal and illegal work. With respect to the American Federation of Labor, it is actually the UCP which stakes out for itself the far left position, with the CEC noting that the UCP program advises party members to "seize every opportunity to voice their hostility to this organization (the AF of L), not to reform it, but to destroy it." The CEC proclaims that on this and all other important points of difference with the CPA that the Comintern supports the UCP policy and challenges its rivals to publish the Comintern's letter in its party press.

### **["August 1920 Budget Request for the Communist Party of America made to the](#)**

**[Comintern."](#)** [Aug. 21, 1920] This is a funding request on behalf of the Communist Party of America (the majority group not uniting with the CLP into the United Communist Party) made by one of the CPA's men in Moscow, Louis C. Fraina. Fraina seeks \$60,000 in all, one-third of

which was to go for the defense and support of prisoners and their families, \$15,000 for agitation among black Americans, \$10,000 for agitation among the military (the latter being two tasks not specifically mentioned in the budget of the UCP), and \$15,000 to start three legal weekly papers. These type of budget requests were not made weekly or monthly, but rather annually (with periodic supplemental pleading). As such, the magnitude of the request—which is the first “blue sky” bid and does not reflect the actual amount allocated and still less the actual amount ultimately received in America—further belies the fantastic claim of Harvey Klehr, John Haynes, and Fredrikh Firsov that “the equivalent of several million dollars in valuables” was provided to the American Communist movement in its first years.

**“The First Month’s Activity of the New Executive Committee: A Brief Report,”** by “M.K.” [events of Aug. 7-25, 1920] The 2nd World Congress of the Communist International, held in Soviet Russia from July 19 through Aug. 7, 1920, was in many respects the first regular conclave—the founding convention of 1919 being an ad hoc assemblage of various individuals, mostly without organizational mandates, who happened to be present in the country at a fortuitous moment. The Executive Committee of the Communist International established in the aftermath of the 2nd Congress was in a sense the first fully “regular” example of that body. This report from the official organ of the Comintern by an individual signing only as “M.K.” details the activity of the new ECCI during the meetings held in its first month, August 1920. It was at the 2nd World Congress and in these meetings that the die was cast with regards to the rest of the social democracy—the 21 Conditions for Admission were established by the Congress and staunchly reaffirmed by the ECCI in its sessions, effectively poisoning the well when the revolutionary upsurge across Europe abated and the new tactical orientation of joint action on the left was called for. “M.K.” details in particular the events of the ECCI meeting of Aug. 9 on the German USPD, in which the Comintern came down in favor of forcing a split of that party of the party Left from its Center. CI President Zinoviev is quoted as saying that “We are not bound to be loyal to people who give a moral weapon to the bourgeoisie [such as Kautsky and Hilferding]. We are bound to sow a feeling of hatred against them.” The matter of “weeding out of the opportunists” was taken up again at the Aug. 11 meeting of ECCI, this time in the context of the Italian party. “M.K.” also notes the results of the ECCI session of Aug. 8, at which time the question of the American Communist movement was discussed. A resolution was passed at that meeting stating in no uncertain terms: “Both Communist Parties of America (United Communist Party and Communist Party) are pledged to unite immediately into one Party in compliance with the decisions of the 2nd World Congress of the Communist International. This unification must be accomplished not later than in 2 months, i.e., by the 10th of October. Any group which will not submit to this resolution shall be excluded from the Communist International.”

## SEPTEMBER

**“B.R.T. Strikers!”** Leaflet of the Communist Party of America, Local New York. [Sept. 1920] Full text of a leaflet, revolutionary in content, issued by the old CPA at the time of a Brooklyn streetcar operators’ strike. The operators are urged to “stop begging and striking for crumbs,” to “repudiate” their “false labor leaders,” and to turn their economic strike into a political strike against the capitalist state. “Get ready for armed revolution to overthrow the Capitalist Government and create a Workers Government—as your brothers did in Russia,” the leaflet

urges, adding that “the Communist Party of America sounds the call for revolution—we stand for the Workers Soviet Republic. You are slaves today. You can be free only by fighting for freedom.”

**“The World Congress of the Communist International,”** by John Reed [circa Sept. 1, 1920] This article from the official organ of the United Communist Party would seem to be the last piece of authentic journalism written by the Communist Labor Party’s Moscow representative, John Reed (Reed dying of typhus about 7 weeks after these words were written). Reed states that the 2nd Congress of the Comintern, recently completed, was “actually its first congress,” with the organizational meeting of the previous year “only a propaganda committee, with a handful of delegates.” Reed states that the 2nd Congress “was remarkable for the number of real proletarians, of actual workmen-fighters-strikers, barricade-defenders and of active leaders of the revolutionary nationalist movements in backward and colonial countries,” containing representatives from communist parties from around the globe. Reed explains the basic political line of the Communist International— for centralization and discipline and with stringent rules for admittance. The National and Colonial Problem loomed large at the Congress, Reed notes, and he details some of the activities on the committee on that subject chaired by Lenin, on which Reed served. The Trade Union Question is said to have been the most divisive at the Congress, and Reed describes the obstacles faced by the American and British delegations in attempting to alter the Comintern’s position on the matter, which was oriented towards boring from within existing unions rather than the establishment of new (often parallel) industrial unions. The American and British industrial unionists “agreed that it was foolish to leave the unions so long as the masses remained in them, and we also agreed that it was necessary to work in the craft unions, not to capture them, however, but to smash them, and to build industrial unions— both as fighting instruments and as the future organs for the administration of industry,” Reed states. The CI position on parliamentarism is also discussed.

**“Report to the Executive Committee of UCP of America by a Delegate from the Communist Labor Party to the 2nd Congress of the Communist International,”** by Alexander Bilan [circa September 1920] Report to the governing CEC of the United Communist Party on the proceedings of the 2nd World Congress of the Comintern and their implications for the American movement. Bilan relates the political situation within the 5 member delegation to the Congress and sharply criticizes CPA courier John Anderson (née Kristap Beika) for failing to deliver the “material support given him for the united Communist Party”—in the name of the CI, he calls for an inquiry. Outside of that—the implications noted in a lengthy footnote by Tim Davenport—Bilan’s report is fascinating as one of the most explicit expressions of the need for preparedness for armed struggle put forward by the American Communist movement. Due to the coordinated international nature of World Imperialism, a disciplined and centralized structure is called for, Bilan declares, one in which “Communists in all countries shall subordinate themselves in general tactical questions and in discipline to the Executive of the Communist International” in illegal, underground “fighting organizations.” The Communists needed to carry out a twofold task, revolutionizing the working masses and preparing themselves to “be ready to lead the masses in the advent of an outbreak.” “Strict discipline has to be inaugurated to train the members to carry out and obey the orders given by the Party,” which had to secretly penetrate every facet of state and society. “The Communist

Commonwealth can only be established through the application of Proletarian Dictatorship, which means that there will be a necessity to organize a Red Army to combat the counterrevolutionary forces and to safeguard the achievements of the revolution. Therefore, the Communists have to be acquainted with the techniques and strategies of modern warfare. At least, every Communist has to know how to handle a gun and how to form a fighting line. This is calling for the establishment of gymnasiums and shooting galleries for services," Bilan states. He additionally calls for the establishment of a youth section and relates Comintern instructions for the publication of specific literature by the party, for the publication of which "the United Communist Party will receive all support from the Executive of the Communist International."

**"Speech at the Congress of the Peoples of the East: Baku, Azerbaijan,"** by John Reed [Sept. 4, 1920] Stenographic report of the final public speech by John Reed, made to the Congress of Peoples of the East in Baku, made less than 6 weeks before his death of typhus in Moscow. This document stands as fairly conclusive evidence that Reed remained loyal to the revolutionary socialist cause to the end of his life. Reed cautions the Eastern delegates not to illusion themselves that the rulers of "free America" is any different than the hated imperialists of Britain, France, or Italy. He notes false American promises of independence to the Philippines, an exploitative system backed by American power in Cuba, military dictatorships set up by American armed intervention in Haiti and Santo Domingo, intervention and counterrevolution sponsored by America in Mexico, and the denial of political and civil rights to 10 million American blacks. American promises of aid and food are not to be trusted, Reed warns, noting that the head of the American aid effort to starving Armenia, Cleveland Dodge, was responsible for driving workers at his copper mines into the desert at bayonet point in a manner fitting of the Turks. American capitalists seek only the mineral wealth of Armenia, Reed says. "Promising food to starving peoples and at the same time organizing a blockade of the Soviet Republics—that is the policy of the United States. The blockade of Soviet Russia has starved to death thousands of Russian women and children. This same method of blockade was applied in order to turn the Hungarian people against their Soviet Government. The same tactic is now being used in order to draw the people of White Hungary into war against Soviet Russia. This method is also being used in the small countries bordering on Russia—Finland, Estonia, Latvia," Reed states. "There is only one road to freedom. Unite with the Russian workers and peasants who have overthrown their capitalists and whose Red Army has beaten the foreign imperialists! Follow the red star of the Communist International!" Reed declares.

### **"Boycott the Elections!" [Leaflet of the Communist Party of America, October 1920]**

The 1920 electoral campaign placed the Communist movement in a difficult position. While still interested in winning imprisoned Socialist leader Eugene Debs to the Communist cause, the illegal and repressed organizations were in no position to run candidates of their own. Nor did they wish to boost their electorally-oriented factional foes, the Socialist Party of America, with its ticket headed by Presidential candidate Eugene Debs. The Communist Party of America's stance was clear: "It is the duty of every class-conscious worker in America to boycott the coming elections. A worker's vote cast for any of the parties or their candidates standing for election — is a vote for reaction or reform! Whether it be the Republican Party and Harding or the Democratic Party and Cox — whether it be the Farm Labor Party and Christensen, the Socialist Party and Debs, or the Socialist Labor and Cox — a worker's vote cast for any of these parties or their candidates IS A VOTE TO PERPETUATE THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM

BASED UPON WAGE SLAVERY and the ROBBERY OF YOUR CLASS." Electoral politics was a chimera, the CPA declared, and revolution a necessity: "These reform parties fool the workers by telling them that the capitalist system can be abolished PEACEFULLY. This is a lie! AN OUTRAGEOUS, DAMNABLE LIE! The capitalist system cannot be abolished peacefully — whether by the ballot box or any other method."

### **"Boycott the Election! Proclamation by the United Communist Party of America."**

[October 1920] The United Communist Party, characterized as electorally-oriented "Centrists" by the rival Communist Party of America, came to an identical position as the CPA regarding the question of whether to support Eugene Debs and the Socialist Party electoral slate in 1920, this leaflet reveals. "Don't you know that the whole business of the elections is a fake intended to make you believe that YOU have something to do with running the affairs of the country?" the leaflet asks its readers. The use of elections as a control mechanism by the bourgeoisie is emphasized: "The capitalists control the newspapers. They control the politicians. They control the schools, colleges, and churches. They control the meeting places. They let you vote because they know that through their control of the means of information they can make you vote for what they want, and that no matter which way you vote, their right to rob you will be protected." Revolution is depicted as the sole possible solution to the question of the transition of power: "Workers, there is only one way to secure better things for yourself. You must smash the capitalist governmental machine — the Capitalist Dictatorship — and set up a Workers' Dictatorship in its place."

**"UCP Financial Report for September 1920."** [October 7, 1920] Set of accounts for the fledgling United Communist Party detailing the organization's receipts and expenditures. Salaries and newspaper production costs are shown to far outstrip dues and funds from subscriptions, a situation offset by the infusion of funds generated by the party's extraordinary \$5 per capita "organization fund." UCP membership dues are shown to have been generated from the Midwest rather than the Northeast, with the organization's two biggest districts being Chicago and Cleveland. Average actual paid membership for the UCP for the organization's first quarter of existence was 3,448, although the organization is optimistically estimated at 4,200 members in October 1920.

### **"Report to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party in New York."** [Sept. 14, 1920]

This is an extremely important archival document, summarizing the activity of the United Communist Party during its first 3 months of activity. While running the gamut of UCP activities, of immediate importance to scholars is—once again—confirmation that the Comintern funding figures cited in Messrs. Haynes and Klehr's 1995 document collection are exaggerated to the point of absurdity. This Sept. 14 report states: "The capacity of our organization to conduct agitation already outstrips our financial ability to supply the necessary literature. After our unity convention, \$25,000 was made available from an outside sources [sic.]. This amount together with our monthly income from the membership of about \$10,000 will be exhausted by the end of September [1920] and we will then have to depend upon our own resources unless other funds reach us." This amount (identical funding being received by

the rival CPA, bear in mind) substantiates the figures cited by Will Weinstone in his short Jan. 4, 1922 funding summary, available here as ["Foreign Treasury Exchange, January 4, 1922: \[A Complete Record of Comintern Subsidies Actually Received by the American Communist Movement, 1919-1921\]."](#) It is also backs up the sets of financial figures presented at the time of UCP-CPA merger at the 1921 Woodstock Convention, by [Executive Secretary Charles Dirba of the Old CPA](#) and by [CEC member and top party leader Ludwig Katterfeld of the UCP](#). (The latter of whom notes explicitly that" \$50,000 was sent [to the UCP] but only \$25,000 arrived here.") Moreover, there exists additional documentary evidence which demonstrates compellingly the failure of early attempts to transmit these unreceived 1920 Comintern funds via John Anderson (Kristap Beika) and John Reed. Rest assured that in September 1920 the UCP was perfectly willing to receive and spend more cash from the Comintern, generously offering to dispose of another \$150,000 of the ECCI's money" in building up the circulation of our official organ, in publishing timely leaflets among the workers, in building up the circulation of our legal paper, and in carrying out our program of shop organization." This money was not forthcoming, however. Note well: **Net funds actually flowed FROM the American Communists TO Soviet Russia rather than vice-versa via the Comintern over the next 24 months**, with funds flowing out for famine relief and technical aid at the same time that Comintern aid was shut down due to the factional war gripping the American movement. 1920 CI funding was thus significant but comparatively modest; while during 1921 and the first half of 1922, far from the fatted hog at the Comintern trough implied by Messrs. Haynes and Klehr, the American Communist movement teetered on the verge of financial insolvency.

["Report to the Executive Committee of the Communist International from the United Communist Party, Sept. 14, 1920."](#) This report to the Communist International rescued from Department of Justice files covers a broad range of matters. It notes that a represented membership of 10,644 was claimed by delegates to the May 1920 Joint Unity Convention which formed the party, although "the task of drawing into it all the elements represented at the convention is not yet complete, as the available membership figures indicate a membership at the present moment of about 7,000." (Actually paid UCP membership for the 3rd Quarter of 1920 was 3,466). The party's publications are detailed at length and shop organizations, legal political work, the prosecutions, and the IWW are discussed briefly. With respect to ongoing unity difficulties with the "faction of the former Communist Party of America" that "still remains outside of the United Communist Party," a set of 4 programmatic differences are detailed. The unity efforts of the Comintern's representative, the yet-unidentified "Comrade Linde," are said to have been met with a rebuff, with the CEC of the CPA "refusing to enter into any discussion of the question." To this end the report states that an explicit unity mandate from the CI "would be a material gain to the American movement." The report provides another stone to the massive and growing mountain of evidence refuting the fantastic 1995 assertion of Harvey Klehr and John Haynes that the early American Communist movement was the recipient of "several million dollars" worth of Comintern aid: "We do not know what the resources of the International are and its policy is in regard to furnishing assistance to sections of the International. If the Executive Committee is in a position to furnish us aid, we believe that the importance of the work in the United States warrants it doing so." The document notes that "After our unity convention [May 26-31, 1920] \$25,000 was made available from an outside sources [sic.]. This amount together with our monthly income from the membership of about \$10,000 will be exhausted by the end of September [1920] and we will then have to depend upon our own resources unless other funds reach us." A plea is made for a \$150,000 appropriation to fund a smorgasbord of enterprises—a blue-sky first proposal, as opposed to

funds actually allocated, disbursed, and received—these being a fraction of this amount for the entire one year life of the UCP.

**“United Communist Party Membership Bulletin #2.”** [c. Sept. 1, 1920] The United Communist Party was an underground organization that took its secrecy seriously. Membership bulletins were hand-delivered via district organizers and subdistrict organizers down to group leaders, one copy to each group with instructions to destroy the mimeographed document after it had been read at the group meeting. The fact that this “secret” bulletin of the UCP was preserved from oblivion in the files of the Justice Department’s Bureau of Investigation demonstrates that this practice was largely ineffective, due no doubt to the penetration of the organization by informants. What was it that the UCP was so intent on shielding from view of the authorities? In this issue we have a good deal about party fundraising, including the UCP’s “\$50,000 Organizational Fund,” built upon a \$5 per member quota. The election of CLP member John Reed to the Executive Committee of the Communist International by the 2nd World Congress is noted with pride. The CI’s open letter to the IWW has been produced in leaflet form for free distribution, it is announced. Recent decisions of a meeting of the CEC are related.

**“United Communist Party Membership Bulletin #3.”** [c. Sept. 15, 1920] This third confidential membership bulletin of the United Communist Party includes district-by-district reports for the party’s 9 territorial subdivisions. It is noteworthy that significant organizing efforts in the Russian language were being conducted in half of these districts—it is not only facile but factually incorrect to assume that the rival CPA was a “Federation party” while the UCP was native-born, as both organizations included massive non-English speaking immigrant contingents. Spending exceeded revenue for the UCP by more than \$6200 in August 1920, the bulletin notes, prompting another call for support of the “\$50,000 Organizational Fund.”

**“Resolution of the Executive Committee of the Communist International on the Case of Louis C. Fraina, Sept. 30, 1920.”** Full text of a leaflet published in 1920 by the Communist Party of America detailing the absolution of Louis Fraina from charges preferred by Santeri Nuorteva of the Russian Soviet Government Bureau in New York that he was a secret police agent. Two hearings were actually conducted, the first by an investigating committee of three (including CLP member Alexander Bilan) which cleared Fraina of the charge; the second a trial reopening the case at Fraina’s request when Nuorteva showed up in Moscow in August 1920. Fraina was again found not guilty of Nuorteva’s allegation and Nuorteva was instructed to cease making accusations against Fraina or else “THE GRAVEST MEASURES” would be used “TO STOP HIM.” A further resolution was made by ECCI on September 29, 1920, insisting that Nuorteva retract publicly, in the press, all charges made against Fraina.

**“Official Decision of the Third International in the Fraina Case”** [Sept. 30, 1920] Official version (from a photostatic original of the document) of the Sept. 30, 1920 decision of ECCI declaring Louis C. Fraina to be “innocent” of the charges levied against him by Santeri

Nuorteva of being an agent in the employ of the United States Department of Justice. The Investigating Committee of 3, consisting of the Communist Labor Party of America's Alexander Bilan, Rosmer from France, and Rudniansky from Hungary, decreed: "1) Neither the former nor the new accusations brought by Nuorteva against Fraina give cause for altering the previous decision of the committee. Nuorteva's evidence consists of his personal opinion only. He offers no real arguments to prove any of his accusations. 2) On the basis of his personal opinion, Nuorteva openly spreads the story (even in the capitalist press) that Fraina is a police spy, that the program of the Communist Party of America was written by a police spy, etc. *Such proceedings are absolutely contrary to the attitude of a true socialist.*" Nuorteva was ordered to cease and desist in his accusations against Fraina, and further, to issue a retraction of his charges in the press.

## OCTOBER

### **["C.E. Ruthenberg's Testimony at His Oct. 1920 New York "Criminal Anarchism" Trial. \(extracts\)"](#)**

An extensive excerpt of the testimony of the former Executive Secretary of the old Communist Party of America at his October 1920 New York trial. C.E. Ruthenberg and I.E. Ferguson were both indicted under a 1902 law implemented by the New York Legislature in the aftermath of the William McKinley assassination, charged with "Criminal Anarchy" for having been members of the National Council of the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party, the 9 member executive board responsible for the publication of the final version of the "Left Wing Manifesto." Ruthenberg and Ferguson were charged with no overt act, but rather with advocacy of "force and violence" against the government. Of particular interest is the onslaught of prosecutorial questioning by the judge in the case, Bartow S. Weeks, and the rather detailed explanation of the revolutionary process by defendant Ruthenberg—one of the most explicit documents of his world-view left for posterity. Both Ruthenberg and Ferguson were convicted and sentenced to 5-10 years of hard labor, a sentence which was ultimately overturned on appeal after significant time was served.

**["Leaflet of the American Defense Society."](#)** [circa October 1920] Propaganda leaflet of the nationalist American Defense Society, which declares: "The Radicals have not yet declared open warfare. Government officials state that their information is that the revolution has been planned to follow the Presidential Election. The winter will be the decisive time for the success or defeat of the Reds." The leaflet notes that the ADS had been distributing hundreds of thousands of pamphlets, placing portraits of nationalist icon Theodore Roosevelt in thousands of school classrooms, and aiding in the "investigation of the methods of radicals" by reporting "seditious words and actions" to Federal officials. "Citizens Committees of Defense" were being formed around the country by the ADS and funds for the organization were solicited.

**["Dynamite and Bombs."](#)** (leaflet of the United Communist Party) [Oct. 1920] This leaflet of the United Communist Party of America dismisses charges made by the "tools" of the capitalists in the press that the Wall Street bombing was the work of the underground Communist movement. "The capitalist system, rotten to the core, can only be upheld by those who profit from it by the use of force. The capitalist class knows that in the final conflict it will be

the force of the working class which will overthrow the capitalist state. Knowing this, it seeks to murder the growing revolutionary consciousness of the workers by a ruthless campaign of prosecution and persecution. ‘Made to order’ plots against the government are framed up. Bombs are found. Mysterious explosions take place. And the blame for all this is placed at the door of the advance guard of the awakening working class by the government agents and the lying capitalist press.” The leaflet notes that “The disaster presented a splendid opportunity for the so-called Department of Justice and the capitalist press to attack the revolutionary forces of the working class. The capitalist government needs a pretext for new laws of repression that will put to shame the tsaristic despotism of ancient Russia.”

**“Letter to the United Communist Party in New York from Charles Dirba, Executive Secretary of the Communist Party of America in New York, circa Oct. 15, 1920.”** By the summer of 1920, the Executive Committee of the Communist International had lost patience with the endless factional shenanigans of the two rival American Communist Parties and it set about to end the counterproductive division of the movement by forcing unity under pain of expulsion. A two month deadline—October 10, 1920—was established for the final amalgamation of the Communist Labor Party and the Communist Party of America. Unfortunately for all concerned, this ultimatum was not successfully transmitted to either of the American Parties. This shocked letter from CPA Executive Secretary Charles Dirba to the leadership of the UCP notes having discovered news of the ultimatum in the columns of the September 14 issue of *Izvestiia*—on October 13, that is, three days AFTER the deadline for final union. Dirba seeks an immediate reply as to whether the UCP had been informed of this deadline. He also upbraids the rival organization for asserting a “downright falsehood” in their bulletin to District Organizers, in which they claimed that the UCP unity committee of two had been rejected out of hand by the CPA. Dirba declares that “we have no knowledge of your committee’s having approached or got in touch with us in any way, and that we have not turned them down.” He seeks a reply by the morning of October 18, 1920 so that the CEC of the CPA may act expeditiously in the unity matter.

**“Radicalism in America,”** by Morris Hillquit. [October 15, 1920] This article by Socialist Party NEC member Morris Hillquit in the party’s official organ reviews the two new political organizations to emerge in post-war America—the Labor Party (which transformed itself to the Farmer-Labor Party) and the Communist Party. Hillquit states that the Labor Party began from a principled position, seeking fundamental change of capitalist society, but was quick to sacrifice principle for expedience on the campaign trail, destroying its working-class nature through a merger with the “nebulous aggregation of middle-class liberals known as the ‘Committee of 48.’” To this amalgam was added the “purely imaginary forces of the farming community,” resulting in an eclectic mish-mash slated for quick political extinction. As for the Communist Party, Hillquit stated that while it was “desirable” to have “extreme” groups within the Socialist Party as a counterbalance to “any existing tendencies to opportunism,” in the current case the Left Wing’s position was not a “legitimate reaction” since the SPA had taken “the most advanced international socialist position” during and after the war. Instead, it was a “quixotic” attempt to duplicate the Bolshevik Revolution in the United States—and effort which had shattered by “endless internecine strife and successive splits” as soon as the negative program of opposition to the SPA leadership was replaced by the positive task of organization building. As a result, neither of the new political groups had made “any essential contribution”

to American radicalism. "The Socialist Party still holds the leadership in radical politics in the United States," Hillquit notes.

**"Open Letter to the Members of the Communist Party of America from Charles Dirba, Executive Secretary, October 20, 1920."** On October 14 the Communist Party of America first learned of the decision two months earlier of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to force unification of the CPA and its hated rivals, the United Communist Party. The party began a flurry of activity to set the stage for this shotgun wedding on its own terms, dispatching a first unity communication to the UCP on October 15, a letter to the CI on October 19, and this letter to its own rank-and-file members the day after that. Executive Secretary Dirba emphasizes that the forced merger will be based upon the Communist International's "Conditions for Affiliation," which specified that all parties "must regularly and systematically remove the reformist and centrist elements from all the more or less important posts." Renegade former members of the CPA C.E. Ruthenberg, I.E. Ferguson, and L. Belsky are singled out along with "defenders of Debs," "Americans' who can not tolerate language federations," and "legalists" as elements to be fought inside the new party and expelled "if necessary." When the time comes CPA members "should see to it that only true comrades, only steadfast and uncompromising communists, are chosen for electors and convention delegates," Dirba declares.

**"Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from Alfred Wagenknecht, Executive Secretary of the United Communist Party in New York,"** October 21, 1920, The local quorum of the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party has considered the inquiry made by your Executive Secretary [Charles Dirba] under date of October 15, and in reply has the following to say: 1. The decision of the Executive Committee of the Third International, obliging the United Communist Party and the Communist Party of America to unite by a certain date, was received by us in the form of the minutes of the Executive Committee [of the Communist International] about ten days ago, through our regular channels of communication with the Third International.

**"Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party in New York from Charles Dirba, Executive Secretary of the Communist Party of America in New York, October 21, 1920."** With ECCI threatening expulsion of any American Communists failing to achieve unity by a date already past, both the United Communist Party and the Communist Party of America accelerated negotiations for their shotgun wedding of a unity convention. In this letter from the CPA to the UCP, Executive Secretary Charles Dirba indicates that a 3 member negotiating committee had been appointed, specifies the basis for a unity convention, and declares that the all important question of delegate election shall be conducted on the basis of proportional representation of audited paid membership over some unspecified period in the past. As the larger of the two organizations, this would place the CPA in a position of majority control at the convention, able to force through the organizational forms and paid staffing decisions it desired. The long-desired unity convention is to be held within two months, the CPA announces.

**“Letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party in New York, October 27, 1920.”**

Having received a definite order from the Communist International to unite with the Communist Party of America, the United Communist Party began to make its case for controlling votes in the body which would give birth to the united organization—despite the smaller size the UCP relative to its rival. The UCP’s latest unity gambit to the CPA had been the convocation of the convention with a delegate ratio matching the vote ratio accorded the two organizations at the recently-concluded 2nd Congress of the Comintern; that is, 6 votes for the UCP to 4 votes for the CPA. Alternative possibilities are suggested to the Comintern, including the addition of 5 CPA members to the 10 member CEC of the UCP or the formation of a 13 member CEC, with 7 members hailing from the UCP to 6 from the CPA. This matter was of critical importance due to the question of federation control, the CEC of the UCP argued, characterizing itself as an active and centralized organization and its rival as a “federation of federations” with an amorphous membership. The argument was made that the UCP better represented “American” workers and was more in accord with the theses of the Comintern on the importance of legal work, lending additional credence to the UCP’s demand for disproportionately strong voting strength in the unity convention.

**“Letter to Rose Ruthenberg in Cleveland from C.E. Ruthenberg in The Tombs Detention Center, New York City, October 30, 1920.”** With his trial over and a sentence of 5 to 10 years in prison received, United Communist Party leader C.E. Ruthenberg composed this letter from The Tombs detention facility in New York City to his wife in Cleveland. Ruthenberg writes: "While the sentence could have been put off for a couple of days, we asked to have it done immediately so that we would not have to remain here for so long. I was asked first whether I had anything to say and made a speech defying the judge and jury and telling them they were part of the capitalist system of coercion and that I had not expected anything else from them. All the NY papers had the story. F[erguson] followed with a speech of the same character. The judge said he expected it from me but was surprised at F[erguson]. He didn't like me because I had treated him with contempt throughout the trial."

**“John Reed is Dead,”** by Robert Minor [Oct. 30, 1920] The Oct. 17, 1920 death of Jack Reed, the representative of the Communist Labor Party (and United Communist Party) to the Executive Committee of the Communist International gave the American Communist movement its first martyr to the cause. This article by cartoonist and *Liberator* editor Robert Minor celebrates the integrity and dedication of the late American writer. Reed turned his back on the pampered Philistinism of American literary circles, Minor indicates, dismissing the bourgeoisie that seeks to surround itself with young writers as drunk, addled, and stupid. “If the young artists are grateful, they become more and more like the people that surround them, and slowly they lose their art. They sink into the position of clowns for the besotted aristocracy, in private life, and they become writers of excited drivel for the magazines and the book market, drivel without real connection with life,” Minor declares. But Reed rejected the ordinary life of the hot young writer, causing the bourgeoisie to erupt. “The propertied classes in America shook with

rage at John Reed. In every city is a committee of businessmen called a Grand Jury, which has the function of picking out all persons who endanger the private ownership of the palaces and automobiles and country estates. Two of these Grand Juries—one in New York and one in Chicago—picked out John Reed as a criminal, indicted him, and demanded that his voice be smothered in jail. Reed eluded them and went back to Russia," Minor notes. "It all goes to show that the artists are ours, the artists belong to the workers, and to be artists at all they must dream—dream of things that frighten Tsars and Grand Juries—dream of workmen in palaces. Art Belongs to the Revolution. John Reed belonged to the workers," Minor concludes. Includes photo of John Reed distributed in commemoration by the UCP.

## NOVEMBER

**"Minutes of the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party of America, November 2-5, 9-16 - 1920."** Marathon plenary session of the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party. As with most CLP and UCP internal documents, the actual content is rather terse. A three member Unity Committee consisting of Max Bedacht, Edward Lindgren, and unidentified "McGee" was elected [Session of Nov. 2]. A convention set for the UCP to be held "not later than December 24th [1920], for the purpose of ratifying the thesis and statutes of the CI" was passed [Nov. 4]. Executive Secretary Wagenknecht was named editor of the Official Organ (Editor Ruthenberg being tried in New York) and a new Executive Secretary was to be named to replace him [Nov. 4]—but this decision was rescinded and a 3 man committee consisting of Wagenknecht, Israel Amter, and the unidentified "Simon" elected instead [Nov. 5]. Lindgren and Bilan were sent to tour the various district organizations to relate the decisions of the 2nd World Congress of the Comintern [Nov. 5]. Louis Hedin resigned as CEC member and editor of the Jewish legal organ [Nov. 10], which was tabled; the resignation was later withdrawn [Nov. 13]. Executive Session was held with the Secretary of the CI's Pan-American Bureau [Nov. 12], the working expenses of whom were covered by the UCP treasury. Official organs were standardized at 8 pages with a 5 cent price [Nov. 14], to be issued twice a month in English, German, Russian, South Slavic, and Hungarian; once a month in Yiddish, Polish, Estonian, Finnish, Lithuanian, Italian, and Latvian. First issues were also called for in Spanish, Bulgarian, Armenian, and Czech. [Nov. 12]. Various leaflets and pamphlets were approved [Nov. 14] but action on shop committees [Nov. 14] and "Young People's Leagues" [Nov. 16] were deferred. The Chicago committee investigating rumors about Leonid Belsky ("Fisher") was instructed to return a report within a week [Nov. 16]. The unidentified CEC member "Simon" was elected party Treasurer, who along with the auditor and Executive Secretary Wagenknecht were to be a subcommittee of 3 to provide for safekeeping of party funds [Nov. 16].

**"Special Convention Call — United Communist Party (Call for the Special 2nd Convention, Dec. 1920)." [circa late November 1920]** Formal convention call for an extraordinary 2nd Convention of the United Communist Party, the self-described "main section of the Third (Communist) International in America." The convention was to be held at the behest of the Communist International, which required its member parties around the world to hold special conventions to ratify immediately to adopt the theses and statutes of the recently

completed Second World Congress of the Comintern. The election scheme for the underground UCP was convoluted, with each group electing an elector, which was to meet in a “branch” electoral meeting of no more than 10 individuals, which would in turn elect one elector to a similar “section” electoral meeting. Expenses for the extraordinary convention were to be paid by yet another supplementary fee on the membership in the form of special organizational stamps.

**“United Communist Party Membership Bulletin #4.”** [c. Nov. 1, 1920] This semi-monthly confidential bulletin read to members of the United Communist Party at underground group meetings details the actions of the organization’s governing Central Executive Committee at its recent meeting. Further refining our understanding of the social composition of the UCP, the CEC determines to issue the bulletin in Russian, Croatian, and Polish, in addition to English. Additional organizing effort was being paid to German, Hungarian, and Italian speakers, this bulletin indicates. The rival CPA, by way of contrast, included important Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Yiddish Federation groups. The CEC declared that correspondence between party members in different groups would be prohibited and that all communications must take place through regular party channels. Further constraint of inner party democracy was established by a CEC ruling that complaints from lower levels could not proceed without being approved by the next higher level of organization—thus complaints by groups against district organizers could be stopped from reaching the CEC by action of the intermediate sections or sub-district organizations (dominated by appointees of the district organizers in question).

**“Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from Alfred Wagenknecht, Executive Secretary of the United Communist Party in New York, November 3, 1920.”** With their confidence bolstered by the privileged position they possessed relative to the Communist Party of America at the 2nd World Congress of the CI during the summer, the UCP opens its unity proposals with this one-sided set of conditions. Although the smaller organization, the UCP demands a set-aside of 60 percent of the delegates to the unity convention—a proportion mirroring the voting blocs allotted at the 2nd World Congress of the CI. This would allow them to control the form of the organization and its paid staff. The other chief obstacle, the nature of the language federations of the new organization, is to be decided in the UCP's favor from the outset as a precondition of unity: “no autonomous groups or federations shall be allowed in the united party.” A further requirement is to be made that voting membership is to be determined on the basis of the number of underground group participants, implicitly ruling out a swath of the CPA's membership contained in semi-legal or legal Lithuanian language groups, etc. In order to comply with ECCI's deadline, the joint unity convention is to be held prior to Jan. 1, 1921, the UCP notes.

**“Fundraising Circular of the American Defense Society, Robert Appleton, Treasurer, November 3, 1920.”** Fighting radicalism was a costly endeavor, treasurer Robert Appleton of the nationalist American Defense Society intimates. “Seditious propaganda, intended to accomplish the destruction of America, is being carried on here by Communists. Even our public school children are employed to distribute it,” the ADS warns in this fundraising form

letter sent to a Nashville, Tennessee Company. "Bill Haywood, head of the IWW, appears to have no difficulty in getting funds for his propaganda! Haywood's followers put up money because he is teaching them how to get what they want without working for it," Appleton asserts. Appleton kindly offers to act as the recipient's "agent in the battle against Communism and Red Radicalism" in exchange for a check for "\$50, or as much more as you can afford."

**"Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party in New York from Charles Dirba, Executive Secretary of the Communist Party of America in New York, November 4, 1920."** On the morning of November 4, 1920, the Communist Party of America received a communication from its representatives in Moscow, Louis Fraina and Nicholas Hourwich, which fundamentally altered the political dynamics of the Comintern's shotgun wedding of the United Communist Party and the CPA. Previously believing itself to be the Comintern's favorite, ECCI instead determined that the two American Communist organizations were to merge on the basis of a level playing field, with delegates proportional to the average of "dues actually paid" for July through October 1920. This ruling seemed to assure the hegemony of the larger CPA at the gathering—and thus the preservation of its preferred organizational form of a federation of strong and partially independent language organizations and the all-important jobs of its professional functionaries. With the hole cards now revealed it would now be the CPA pushing for unity and the UCP attempting to stall and defer while it worked behind the scenes for a revision of this ECCI decision.

**"Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from Alfred Wagenknecht, Executive Secretary of the United Communist Party in New York, November 5, 1920."** Executive Secretary of the United Communist Party Alfred Wagenknecht answers the November 3 communication of his Communist Party of America counterpart, Charles Dirba, with bluster and bluff—the November 4 letter seemingly having crossed in the mail. After declaring the UCP to be "the body through which the Communist International functions in the United States," Wagenknecht mulls aloud the scenario of forcing the liquidation and merger of the CPA into the UCP without a convention. Only the possibilities of resulting "inequities" have stayed the UCP from this course, Wagenknecht intimates. He then declares CPA membership figures to be padded with members of federations only nominally participating in the underground party, instead belonging to their respective language federations for "social and nationalistic reasons." Wagenknecht makes the demonstrably false assertion that "The membership figures published by both parties for the months of July, August, and September 1920 show that the United Communist Party has twice as many members as the Communist Party" and then graciously repeats his offer to allow the (actually larger) CPA a 40% set-aside of delegates to the unity convention—"a larger representation than its actual membership would entitle the CP to." Failure to comply with the UCP's ultimatum will result in an immediate appeal to the Comintern "to take decisive steps to compel obedience to its mandate for unity" by unilaterally liquidating the CPA and its constituent federations, Wagenknecht declares.

**"Workers! What is Coming? Proclamation by the United Communist Party."** [circa Nov. 6, 1920] Leaflet of the United Communist Party, apparently issued in conjunction with the 3rd

anniversary of the Russian October Revolution. The UCP portrays an America with a full throttle class war in effect — “actual civil war” between mine owners and miners in West Virginia, state troopers employed against coal miners in Pennsylvania, army soldiers used in streetcar strikes in Denver and New York City. “These strikes and scores of others in which the same thing is happening shows you what is coming. These strikes and scores of others in which the same thing is happening shows you what is coming,” the leaflet declares. “You cannot travel any other road. Either the capitalists will crush you, as they are now doing, or you must crush them. The fight is yours, workers! You must organize your power. You must unite your strength. Either you must fight for freedom or submit to worse conditions than you have experienced before.”

**“Report Estimating Radical Group Membership in New York Submitted to J. Edgar Hoover by Charles J. Scully, Head of Radical Division in the name of T.M. Reddy, Acting Special Agent in Charge, NY District, Nov. 8, 1920.”** As the end of 1920 drew to a close chief federal Red hunter J. Edgar Hoover sought an assessment as to how the year old effort to break up the radical movement was affecting membership levels of target organizations. Charles Scully, head of the anti-radical division of Bureau of Investigation’s New York office provided this report in reply. Scully comically inflates the estimated memberships of the Socialist Party (“150,000”), Socialist Labor Party (“50,000”), Rand School of Social Science (“30,000”), and Young People’s Socialist League (“25,000”). The more carefully scrutinized Communist movement, on the other hand, seems to be underestimated: with the Communist Party, United Communist Party, and the (no longer extant) Communist Labor Party pegged at 500 members each. The anarchist Union of Russian Workers organization in the New York District is estimated at 200, plus an additional 1500 Italian and Russian anarchists outside this organization. “The membership in most of the aforementioned organizations was decidedly greater prior to the investigations made by this office during the current year, particularly the URW, the Communist Parties, the World War Veterans, etc.,” Scully asserts.

**“U.S. v. Albert Bailin, Violation of Section 215, Criminal Code,” by C.J. Scully”** [Nov. 11, 1920] Report dealing with an investigation by the US Attorney’s office of the head of the Thiel Detective Agency regarding the activities of its employee, Albert Bailin. Bailin, who worked for the Department of Justice as a confidential undercover informant, seems to have made a career by fabricating the existence of a radical secret society called the “Knights of the Red Star.” “In my personal opinion, the aforementioned organization is a myth, and exists solely in the imagination of Bailin,” Scully notes, adding that “It appears that wherever Bailin has worked — in the Bureau, with the Thiel Agency, and later with the Burns Agency — his principle subject for investigation is this organization, and an investigation made by this office from time to time has failed to show the existence of same anywhere in this district, nor have our “undercover” men been enabled to secure any information concerning same.” The government apparently brought charges against Bailin for his fraudulent activities in manufacturing unsigned letters which were sent to the United States Attorney’s office in Chicago.

**“Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from Alfred Wagenknecht, Executive Secretary of the United Communist**

**Party in New York, November 14, 1920.**" Facing the prospect of a unity convention proportionally delegated on the basis of dues actually paid in the past — and minority status — the UCP stalled for 10 full days after receiving notification from the CPA before deciding upon a policy of denial. Only six weeks remained to organize a unity convention before the Jan. 1, 1921 drop-dead date declared by the Executive Committee of the Comintern, but the UCP contended that no formal notification of ECCI's decision had been accorded it. "We state that we can only rely upon our own means of communications with the Executive Committee of the Communist International and see no reason for altering the provisions for the joint convention nor the basis for representation for same," the CEC of the UCP brazenly declared.

**"Statement on the Unity Proceedings Between the Communist Party and the UCP of A,"** by Charles Dirba [Nov. 15, 1920] The first of four typeset leaflets prepared for the rank and file of the Communist Party of America detailing the status of unity negotiations with the rival United Communist Party. Includes full text of: (1) Fraina and Hourwich to CPA, Sept. 30 (Detailing effort by UCP delegate Lindgren to unseat the CPA delegates from the 2nd Congress of the CI); (2) CPA to UCP, Oct. 20 (passing along recently discovered CI decision for unity by Oct. 10, 1920 and formation of a committee of 3 to negotiate unity with a convention within 3 months); (3) UCP to CPA, Nov. 3 (rebuking CPA for not supporting previous unity efforts and announcing a 3 person unity committee of their own, empowered to negotiate a unity convention by Jan. 1, 1921, with conditions); (4) CPA to UCP, Nov. 3 (short refusal to revise unity details established by previous CI decision); (5) UCP to CPA, Nov. 5 (expression of belief that federations will manipulate organizational figures, statement that published figures by both parties show that "the UCP has twice as many members as the CP," offer of 60% UCP/40% CPA delegate split); (6) CPA to UCP, Nov. 4 (minor technical point). Dirba states that "the UCP lies and misrepresentations about the CP have been completely exposed. Their stupid and arrogant pose that they are the 'majority' is now revealed in its true light." He dismisses the UCP demand for 60-40 delegate superiority in the unity convention as "ridiculous" and already denied by the CI's specification of the mechanism to achieve unity, based on proportional representation based upon July-Sept. 1920 average membership.

**"Open Letter from the United Communist Party to the Executive Committee of the Third International on Unity."** [circa Nov. 20, 1920] This is an enormously long letter to ECCI outlining the United Communist Party's official position on unification with their rivals of the Communist Party of America, set to type as a newspaper broadsheet for domestic informational purposes. The leadership of the CPA are called "unprincipled characters" who "have manifested their love for, and understanding of Communism solely by a struggle for control." The document offers perhaps the most detailed critique extant of the CPA's "federation of federations" structure. The language federations began as a necessity in the Socialist Party due to that organization's failure to connect with immigrant workers, the UCP contends, many of whom were unable to vote. Over time these semi-autonomous organizations emerged as an instrument of power politics, voting en bloc. After the split of the SP and the emergence of the multi-lingual, non-electoral Communist movement, the largely independent language federations lost their reason for existence, but continued nevertheless as an instrument of clique control by a section of the CPA leadership. The UCP touts its multilingual party literature and declares the liquidation of semi-autonomous federations to be an essential precondition of lasting unity. The UCP also charges the CPA with having inflated paid

membership statistics, owing to the inclusion of Lithuanian and Latvian legal organizations which were only nominally subdivided into pseudo-underground "groups" of 10. "The moment the parties united and the principle of strict centralization and underground organization is applied to them, they will disappear from the communist movement, and rightly so, as they are anything but communists," the UCP declares. The UCP repeats its demand for a 60% delegate set-aside in the forthcoming unity convention and proposes the possible alternative of a forced merger of the CPA into the UCP with no convention at all.

**"United Communist Party Membership Bulletin #5."** [c. Nov. 20, 1920] A valuable official membership count of the United Communist Party appears in this fifth bulletin to the group's underground membership. Whereas the rival CPA was exclusively a Northeastern organization, strength of the UCP was clustered in the Midwest, with both the Chicago and Cleveland districts topping New York both in terms of total members and primary party organizations ("groups"). Both organizations seem to have been inflating membership counts in anticipation of merger. A more sanguine average count of 3448 for the UCP for the months of July, August, and September 1920 is offered, which is stacked against an estimated paid membership of 2431 for the rival CPA in the same period. In short, about a year of anti-radical repression and the disruption and disillusionment caused by unceasing factional warfare had sliced Communist and Left Socialist party allegiance from about 60,000 SPA duespayers at the time of the 1919 split to less than one-tenth of that number. November actions of the UCP's governing Central Executive Committee during its November sessions is also summarized in this bulletin.

**"Speeches to the 4th World Congress of the Comintern on the Negro Question," by Otto Huiswoud and Claude MacKay** [Nov. 25, 1922] The 4th World Congress of the Comintern of 1922 marked the first time a plenary session of that organization dealt with the so-called "Negro Problem." The report of the CI's Negro Commission and its proposed resolution was delivered in a speech by American Communist Party delegate Otto Huiswoud, to which was added additional commentary by fraternal delegate Claude McKay of the African Blood Brotherhood. Huiswoud observes that at the present time there were some 450 black newspapers and magazines in the United States, headed by the weekly Chicago Defender (circulation 250,000) and the monthly The Crisis (600,000). Huiswoud likens the situation in the American South faced by 9 or 10 million of the country's 12 million black citizens to Dante's Inferno: "almost a country by itself," marked by racism and racist violence. The labor situation in the country as a whole was hampered by the refusal of the established unions to organize or in many cases even to accept black workers, Huiswoud indicated. Huiswoud and the Negro Commission proposed the establishment of a full-time Negro Bureau of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. Work among American blacks conducted by blacks themselves was requested. Reiterating Huiswoud's position, radical poet Claude McKay emphasized the ultra-violent political environment in the South, which would require use of illegal organization there by the Communist movement. McKay also indicates that racism was a problem among white Communist Party members themselves, which he calls "the greatest difficulty that the Communists of America have got to overcome — the fact that they have got to emancipate themselves from the ideas they entertained towards the Negroes before they can be able to reach the Negroes with any kind of radical propaganda."

**UCP Unity Bulletin No. 2.** [Nov. 27, 1920] Text of a mimeographed bulletin from the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party to its membership, informing them of ongoing unity negotiations with the rival Communist Party of America. The bulletin notes the decision of the "small bureau" of the Executive Committee of the Comintern to require a unity convention delegated on the basis of dues paying membership for July, August, September, and October 1920. "This does not mean that we shall alter our determination to safeguard the Communist movement in America from those who would fasten upon it a decentralized federation form of organization and narrow, sectarian policies. We shall insist upon all the provisions regarding centralized organization and bona fide underground membership which we enumerated in our first communication to the CP and printed in our first unity bulletin," the second UCP bulletin notes. The bulletin discusses the "barefaced frauds" in membership counting by which "some federation leaders maintained their control in the past." The bulletin promises that "IT WILL NOT WORK THIS TIME" (emphasis in original).

## DECEMBER

**"Again Mr. Hillquit."** [Published circa Dec. 1, 1920] This is the unsigned lead article from the UCP's official organ, *The Communist* (#11), written in response to a piece called "Again the Moscow International" by Socialist Party leader Morris Hillquit which appeared in the *New York Call* on Nov. 15-16, 1920. Hillquit, called a member of a "triumvirate" of the SP's current leadership (along with Party founders Victor Berger and Seymour Stedman), is taken to task for expressing the belief in the possibility of the working class being able to make use in the existing American state apparatus for its own purposes—rather than facing the necessity of destroying that apparatus and constructing a new one, as the UCP contended. "It is too much to ask of Mr. Hillquit's Marxism that it realize or acknowledge that the mission of the proletarian revolution is not the establishment of a working class government similar to the government of the capitalist class, but that its aim is to build an instrument for the fundamental change of society from capitalism to communism," the unnamed UCP writer asserts. Hillquit is also criticized for his statement that the leaders of the Comintern are intent upon making use of "a new, untried, and fanciful form" of political organization "to supplant the historic organizations of Socialism and labor." The Social Democratic parties of Germany, Russia, France, Great Britain, and the United States are all dismissed as bulwarks of national chauvinism and collaborators with the war on the Bolshevik revolution. Hillquit is called a "charlatan" for "posing as a revolutionist" while at the same time "betraying the workers' revolution to the capitalist class." This article demonstrates the depth of hostility expressed by the American Communist movement towards the Social Democratic movement from its earliest days.

**"Call for a Special Convention of the Communist Party of America."** [December 1920] This is the convention call for an extraordinary 3rd Convention of the Communist Party of America ("majority"). The call stated that the convention was necessary to bring the program and tactics of the CPA into "perfect conformity with the decisions adopted and policies determined upon by the Communist International, especially as enunciated in the various theses and the conditions of affiliation." The delegates were to be elected to this Convention from the bottom up—beginning with elections by each Group to a Branch Electors meeting,

which was to elect representatives to the Local Convention. This in turn was to elect representatives to the Sub-District Convention, and these to the District Convention, which would ultimately elect delegates to the party convention. While the first round of elections were held in December 1920, the 3rd Convention of the CPA was not held until February 1921. This 10 day Brooklyn, NY gathering, held in conditions of extreme secrecy, was attended by 30 delegates and 7 fraternal delegates.

**UCP Unity Bulletin No. 3.** [circa Dec. 7, 1920] Third mimeographed bulletin from the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party to its membership, informing them of ongoing unity negotiations with the rival Communist Party of America. Specific paid dues numbers are provided for the four months to be considered in apportioning delegates to a unity convention with the CPA, suddenly jumping from 2,906 in July and 3,289 in August 1920 to a highly unlikely 5,661 in October. An average for the four months of 4,350 is thus produced—although this appears to be inflated by nearly 25% from the organization's actual membership level. The CPA, playing the same inflation game, showed "growth" from a dues-actually-paid membership of 4,851 in July 1920 to 10,555 in September and 8,460 in October, producing an average of 7,552. Such numbers would ensure a "crushing" of the UCP in any convention delegated on the basis specified by ECCI. The UCP predictably follows by attempting to discredit the validity of the CPA's dues figures and to obstruct a proportionally-delegated unity convention. "The membership of the UCP must realize, with its CEC, what danger the communist movement would have to face if delivered into the hands of irresponsible comrades. The Communist International placed confidence in the UCP. It functions through the UCP in this country, publishes all its official documents through the UCP, pledges its material support to the UCP, and recognizes the UCP as the best expression of the communist movement in the United States. We must guard this trust by guarding the communist movement against the danger of being tied hand and foot to the stake of a communist inquisition," the bulletin melodramatically and self-servingly declares.

**"The Second UCP Convention."** [convention began Dec. 24, 1920; article published early Jan. 1921] This unsigned report appeared in the official organ of the United Communist Party and outlines for the membership of that organization the basic accomplishments of the Extraordinary Second Convention of the UCP. The primary task of the gathering was to approve the Theses and Resolutions of the 2nd World Congress of the Comintern — a non-controversial unanimous decision. Instead, it was the unity question and the seriatim consideration of a new constitution for the underground party that consumed much of the convention's time and energy. A series of messengers were dispatched from the Kingston site of the Second Convention to the CEC of the rival Communist Party of America in New York City attempting to bring about a unity convention on terms other than the proportional representation based on actually paid members (as specified by the instructions of the Comintern). Instead, the UCP convention offered to meet in unity convention with the CPA on the basis of organizational parity — and a slate of 25 delegates for such a future gathering were elected by the 42 assembled delegates at the 2nd UCP Convention. A new Central Executive Committee was also elected, although not a single detail about this change of leading personnel was published in the erstwhile underground official organ, even in pseudonymous form.

### **“The United Communist Party: A Bureau of Investigation Report,” by Emil A. Solanka**

[Dec. 6, 1920] This is an extensive report by Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Emil Solanka detailing the activities of the United Communist Party of America. The document indicates that the use of pseudonyms by the UCP was indeed somewhat effective in hindering the Bol’s efforts at identification, generating a misidentification of the Executive Secretary. Bureau reports on the UCP are summarized chronologically. Text of UCP Membership Bulletin No. 1, dated Aug. 14, 1920, is included among the content. Noteworthy from this source is the declaration that “VERY special information will not even be published in Bulletins, but conveyed verbally through organizers.” Decisions of an undated meeting of the governing Central Executive Committee of the UCP is included, including a decision on publication frequency of the official organ, The Communist, which indicates that English, Russian, Polish, and Hungarian were to be the languages of regular, twice-monthly publication.

### **“Circular Letter to the Membership of the United Communist Party from the CEC of the UCP in New York Regarding the Need for Security.” [circa Dec. 10, 1920]**

This circular letter from the governing Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party (obtained by the Bureau of Investigation) reviews party procedure for the maintenance of security of the underground organization. Despite the fact that “spies, stool pigeons, provocateurs, and every form of scum is bound, in some way or other, to get into the organization or learn of its activities,” it is essential for the UCP to remain active, the circular letter indicates. For the protection of the organization, the membership is strongly reminded to observe the constitutionally-mandated 2 month probation period for new members. “Only by unanimous consent can an applicant be accepted into group membership.” Furthermore, gatherings of party members are go be conducted only in the context of groups (primary party units of 10 or less). Propaganda is to be distributed without the taking of needless risks and is to be distributed completely, not stockpiled. In the event of arrest, members are instructed to follow a simple rule of thumb: “ANSWER NOTHING. Give no party information. Give no names. In many instances arrested members have incriminated themselves answering questions asked by detectives. NO ANSWERS. NO NAMES. ABSOLUTELY NONE, no matter what their threats may be.... At all stages ask for a LAWYER, naming the defense attorney engaged by the party. If you are brought before an Immigration Commissioner and are shown a warrant for your deportation, answer only formal questions as to your age, nationality, arrival in the United States, etc., but REFUSE to answer any questions as to your political beliefs.”

### **“United Communist Party—‘Groups’ According to Language: As of December 1920.”**

This is based upon an internal document of the United Communist Party captured by the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Investigation in the April 1921 raid on UCP National Headquarters in New York. The UCP prided itself on having largely eliminated the federation-based form of organization which typified its rival, the Communist Party of America. Groups (Primary Party Units of between 5 and 10 members) were nevertheless based around language as well as geography and statistics tabulated by the organization. This snapshot from the midpoint of the UCP’s one year of existence surprisingly shows more South Slavic (Croatian and Slovenian) language groups than any other (144), followed by the Russian (136), English (121), German (61), Latvian (49), Yiddish (37), Lithuanian (34), and Finnish (31) language groups.

**“Further Statement on Unity Proceedings,” by Charles Dirba** [circa Dec. 1, 1920] The second of four typeset leaflets prepared for the rank and file of the Communist Party of America detailing the status of unity negotiations with the rival United Communist Party. Largely a polemic rather than a document collection. Dirba states that membership figures exchanged Nov. 28, 1920 show for the July-Sept. test period an average paid membership of 7,552 for the CPA vs. 4,561 for the UCP, a proportional delegate ratio of 5:3 in favor of the CPA. Dirba attempts to refute a long series of false statements in the UCP’s appeal to the Comintern, making clear the bias of the UCP against language federations and that the UCP’s intent is “arbitrarily to swallow the CP.” Includes full text of: (1) CPA to UCP, Nov. 24 (short statement by CPA unity committee consisting of Dirba, Cohen, and Wilenkin that they are ready to proceed); (2) UCP to CPA, Nov. 24 (frank statement that “the CEC of the UCP still maintains the position...that the interests of the Communist movement in America imperatively demand a major representation, arbitrarily fixed in advance, for the UCP at the Unity Convention, not only on the ground of its greater numerical strength, but also because its centralized form of organization, every group of which is underground...” The offer of 60% UCP/40% CPA delegate representation is repeated); (3) CPA to UCP, Nov. 30 (acceptance of UCP’s declared membership of 4,561 and insistence that the UCP act on its membership statement immediately, since time before the Jan. 1, 1921 unity deadline was short).

**“Further Negotiations on Unity,”** by Charles Dirba [circa Dec. 5, 1920] Although written slightly after the publication of the 2nd of 4 CPA membership leaflets on the unity question, this material, published unsigned in the pages of the CPA’s official organ, is transitional between the first two leaflets. Includes full text of: (1) CPA to UCP, Nov. 13 (noting 8 day delay in the CPA’s request for a further meeting of Unity Committees and request for an immediate reply); (2) UCP to CPA, Nov. 14 (Indication that delay relates to waiting for the UCP contact to verify the CI’s determined basis for representation at a unity convention); (3) ECCI resolution of Sept. 20 (extending date for unification to Jan. 1, 1921); (4) Excerpts from ECCI Minutes of Aug. 20 (motion of John Reed setting basis for Unity Conference as proportional to the number of dues payers as of Sept. 1, with addendum by Small Bureau of ECCI changing basis to average dues payers for July-Sept. 1920); (5) CPA to UCP, Nov. 24 (Short statement by CPA unity committee consisting of Dirba, Cohen, and Wilenkin that they are ready to proceed); (6) UCP to CPA, Nov. 24 (frank statement that “the CEC of the UCP still maintains the position...that the interests of the Communist movement in America imperatively demand a major representation, arbitrarily fixed in advance, for the UCP at the Unity Convention, not only on the ground of its greater numerical strength, but also because its centralized form of organization, every group of which is underground...” The offer of 60% UCP/40% CPA delegate representation is repeated).

**“Another Renegade.” [H.F. Kane] by James P. Cannon** [Dec. 11, 1920] Jim Cannon, editor of the Communist Party’s legal English weekly, *The Toiler*, takes aim at the editor of the editor of *The Industrial Worker*, the Western organ of the Industrial Workers of the World. Cannon charges editor H.F. Kane with being a “renegade” for parroting the line advanced by John Spargo and Charles Edward Russell that Soviet Russia was “propped up by bayonets,” had “sent invading armies into other countries,” and was a country in which workers were not “permitted to freely travel through the interior looking for employment.” Cannon indicates that

“We have confidence that the western members of the IWW will deal promptly with this man Kane who has attacked the revolution in their name.” “...You can’t fool them about the Russian Revolution, Mr. Kane!” Cannon declares, adding that “They know, as the workers all over the world know, that the Workers’ Republic of Russia represents their highest hopes and aspirations. They know that the enemies of the Russian Revolution are the enemies of the working class!”

**“Third Statement on the Unity Proceedings,”** by Charles Dirba [Dec. 16, 1920] The third of four typeset leaflets prepared for the rank and file of the Communist Party of America detailing the status of unity negotiations with the rival United Communist Party. Dirba bitterly declares, “Our predictions about the “investigation on the ground” of our membership by the UCP have come true. It was merely a pretext upon which the UCP intended to defy and now has actually defied the mandates of the Executive Committee of the Comintern for a joint convention of both parties on the basis of proportional representation.” Includes text of: (1) UCP to CPA, Dec. 12 (lengthy document announcing “Our investigation shows that your entire statement of membership bears on its very face the evidence of gross manipulations. We find that in many places your membership is not half of what you claim, and that in others you count as members of the CP many members of social and legal organizations. These are only nominally divided into groups and take no part in underground Communist activity.” The UCP obfuscates by attempting to convert the CPA membership figures — based on dues stamp sales — to UCP-style revenue received numbers, noting serious discrepancies between the two methodologies); (2) CPA to UCP, Dec. 16 (very lengthy response detailing the methodological errors systematically applied by the UCP in an effort to achieve a false result of its “investigation” of the CPA books. The CPA letter states that “We have submitted a record of the dues paid during the four months designated by the Communist International, which shows as near as possible the correct average dues paying membership in our Party for that period. Your ‘analysis’ of these figures is nothing more than deliberate distortion and juggling of figures. Your ‘investigation on the ground’ to disprove our membership figures contains no facts or proof, except unsupported allegations purporting to be reports of your organizers who are supposed to be in close touch with our membership.”)

**“Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America in New York from the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party in New York, December 12, 1920.”** Facing a future joint unity convention with delegates apportioned between the UCP and the CPA on the basis of actually paid membership for July-October 1920 and seeing that they were substantially outnumbered by their rivals, the United Communist Party lost little time in ditching its chant for unification and moving straight into advanced level obfuscation. This is the reply of the CEC of the UCP to the set of figures and supplemental documentation provided by the CPA in November to document its membership for unity convention delegate apportionment. Executive Secretary Wagenknecht and the UCP swirl mud into the water, making specious arguments about CPA dues dollar amounts and citing irrelevant membership statistics for the Lithuanian Federation rather than attempting to verify the claimed number for CPA actually paid members for July-Oct. 1920, that being 7,552. After hemming and hawing and hoisting needless numbers, Wagenknecht declares, “The statements from our district and group organizers who are in closest touch with your membership are unanimous to the effect that you have only a fraction of the membership

that you claim in the respective localities." He adds that "We already have on hand sufficient evidence to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that your membership claims are not in accordance with the facts, and that the bona fide underground membership of the United Communist Party far outnumbers that of the CP." None too honestly he concludes that the UCP has "accepted the mandate of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to enter into a unity convention with representation proportioned upon 'an honest count of bona fide underground membership,' and stand ready now to act upon that mandate. But your statement provides absolutely no basis for ascertaining the actual membership of the CP organized and functioning in underground groups. Therefore we have unanimously decided that it can not be accepted."

**["Letter to the Unity Committee of the UCP in New York from Charles Dirba, Executive Secretary of the CPA in New York, Dec. 30, 1920."](#)** In November of 1920, the United Communist Party and the Communist Party of America exchanged their books and membership documents so that each might verify the claims of the other in conjunction with a forthcoming Joint Unity Convention—delegates to which were to be apportioned on the basis of dues actually paid for the months of July, August, September, and October 1920. This is the letter from CPA Executive Secretary Charles Dirba accepting the claims made by the UCP. What is most interesting about the document is the revelation it makes that the UCP did not track its members in terms of dues stamps sold, but rather that it tracked the cash value of dues collected—\$12,004.70 for the period in question, which when divided by the monthly dues rate of 75 cents per member yields an average paid membership of 4,001. This number was inflated by the UCP—the inflation accepted by the CPA, albeit declared "a little too high"—by 150 for membership in two districts without paid DOs, the funds of which stayed in the district for organizational purposes; 150 to account for "dual" husband/wife memberships, for which only one stamp was sold; and 260 to compensate for dues collected at a lower rate in the merger month of July 1920. The UCP membership figure accepted for merger was thus 4,561—as compared to the claim of 7,552 made by the CPA. It was now the UCP that was stonewalling in the face of these figures. "It is up to you now to act on our statement," declared Dirba, "The time for the joint convention is very short. Every day must be counted and used in the preliminary arrangements.... We insist that your committee come to meet with our committee again in the next few days."

## Undated

### **["Down With the Betrayers of the Workers Proclamation to the Striking Railwaymen by the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America."](#) [1920]**

Newsprint agitational leaflet issued by the Communist Party of America in New York on behalf of the ongoing wildcat strike of railway employees. Firmly dual unionist in tone, the leaflet encourages the workers to "Sweep aside the traitors to the working class in your organization. Throw them out of your organization, making your organization the militant expressing of the workers. Keep it out of the reactionary American Federation of Labor." After purging their union of comfort-loving officials intent on aiding the capitalist class by proclaiming the strike "illegal," the railwaymen are encouraged to fight "AGAINST THE CAPITALISTS AND THE WHOLE

CAPITALIST SYSTEM." The railway workers are urged to transform their organization into "ONE BIG UNION OF RAILWAYMEN FIGHTING FOR THE WORKERS."

**"They Are Making One Front,"** by Robert Minor [Dec. 18, 1920] Shortly after the 3rd anniversary of the Russian Revolution, former anarchist Robert Minor unveils his perspective that the world is splitting into two warring camps in this well-crafted essay. "Little groups, little cliques, little sects, are quickly melting into and crystallizing in either one or the other of two giant forms. Every little formation may still scream of its separateness, but the monster iron dividing line—the "front!"—is flung calmly and silently through the multitude and divides all things and men whether they will or not, into two and only two hard-crystallizing divisions." On one side of the barricades: "Everywhere we hear the cry of the herders—monarchs, republicans, liberal-bourgeois, Catholic, atheist-bourgeois, and Protestant; reformer—pacifist and military reactionist—all together the herders whip men into line of the new loyalty that will make men slaves—loyalty to the one great Capitalist International." On the other: "Everywhere the working class, too, is stirring, jolted and bruised and rudely wakened from its daylight dreams. The cries of mobilizing men come also from the depths, from the alleys and kennels where workmen live. Men who have been dreaming of this time, have dreamed of its being in a different way. Some are still dreaming." But Minor refuses to dream any longer about theoretical possibilities, he puts aside his prior convictions in light of the actual situation and chooses sides: "The past few years have settled many questions. One question is Parliamentarism, and it was settled to the extreme dislike of most Socialist lawyers. Another question is the question of a temporary military organization resembling a State, and that was settled to the distaste of many Anarchists. But history has settled it. It has proven that the working class, whether we like it or not, is going to win its fight by means of a temporary dictatorship, and we take our choice between being out of the fight or in the fight in the form which it takes, not in any imaginary form. The one front has been drawn by history, and no man can draw it otherwise. Whether we like it or not, there will be one front. And I think that one front is the Third International."

**"Letter to Rachele Ragozin in Brooklyn from C.E. Ruthenberg at Sing Sing Penitentiary, Ossining, NY, Dec. 29 1920."** [excerpt] Imprisoned United Communist Party editor C.E. Ruthenberg recounts the recharging of his intellectual batteries for his girlfriend and muse, Rachele Ragozin. Only since his imprisonment had Ruthenberg felt fully revitalized, he writes: "For nearly a year, before, I had felt discontented and dissatisfied with the part I was playing; that I was not thinking up to my ideal. I felt, somehow, I had fallen below my own standard of the motives that should dominate and inspire me. I felt that, just as my face had grown a little heavier in outline, so also my spirit had become a little flabby.... The mental shirking is over. You have restored my faith and reinspired my thought in regard to the other. I have regained the spirit of my past life — to work unflinchingly for what I consider worth working for, to love greatly — if I can do that, life cannot hurt me no matter what it brings."